THE MOSS TROOPERS

S. R. CROCKETT

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THE MOSS TROOPERS

BY

S. R. CROCKETT

AUTHOR OF "THE RAIDERS," "ROSE OF THE WILDERNESS,"
"ANNE OF THE BARRICADES," ETC.

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CHAPTER I

HEIRESS AND HEIR

THEY stood high on the Abbey cliff-edge—an old man, eagle-profiled, hawk-beaked, cockatoo-crested, with angry grey eyebrows running peakily upwards towards his temples at either side . . . and a boy.

They were the Earl Raincy and his grandson Louis —all the world knew them in that country of the Southern Albanach. For Leo Raincy was a great man, and the lad the heir of all he possessed.

For all—or almost all—they looked upon belonged to the Earl of Raincy. Even those blue hills bounding the meadow valleys to the north hid a fair half of his property, and he was sorry for that. Because he was a land miser, hoarding parishes and townships. He grudged the sea its fringe of foam, the three-mile fishing limit, the very high-and-low mark between the tides which was not his, but belonged to the crown—along which the common people had a right to pass, and where fisherfolk from the neighbouring villages might fish and dry their nets, when all ought to have been his.

The earl's dark eyes passed with carelessness over hundreds of farm-towns, snug sheltered villages, mills with little threads of white wimpling away from the unheard constant clack of the wheel, barns, byres and stackyards—all were his, but of these he took no heed.

Behind them Castle Raincy itself stood up finely from the plain of cornland and green park, an artificial lake in front, deep trees all about, patterned gardens, the fiery flash of hot-house glass where the sun struck, and pinnacles high in air, above all the tall tower from which Margaret

de Raincy had defied the English invader during the minority of James the Fifth. The earl's eyes passed all these over. He did not see them as aught to take pride in.

What he lingered upon was the wide pleasant valley beneath him, with a burn running and lurking among twinkling birches, interspersed with alders, many finely-drained fields with the cows feeding belly-deep with twitching tails, and the sweep of the ripening crops which ran off to either side over knolls carefully planed down—and so back and back to the shelter of dark fir woods. Twelve hundred acres—and not his! Not a Raincy stone upon it, nor had been for four hundred years.

There were two houses on this twelve hundred acres of good land. First came Cairn Ferris, at the head of the glen of the Abbey Water. Close to the road that, under the lee of the big pines, a plain, douce, much-ivied house; and down in a nook by the sea, Abbey Burnfoot, called "The Abbey," a newer and brighter place, set like a jewel on the very edge of the sea, the white sand in front and the blue sweep of the bay widening out on either hand. Horrible—oh, most horrible! Not his—nor ever would be!

This was the blot which blackened all the rest—the property of the Ferrises of Cairn Ferris, of Adam, chief of the name at the top of the Glen, and of his brother Julian—he who had cursed the noble scythe-sweep of the Abbey Bay, which all ought to have been untouched Raincy property, with crow-stepped gables and beflowered verandahs.

"They stole it, boy, stole it!" muttered old Earl Raincy, setting a shaking hand on the boy's shoulder, "four hundred years ago they stole it. They came with the Stuart king who had nothing to do in the Free Province, and we stood for the Douglases, as was our duty. Your ancestor and mine was killed at Arkinholm with three earls and twenty barons, he not the least noble!"

He paused a moment to control his senile anger and then went quavering on.

"This Ferris was a mercenary—a fighter for his own hand, and they gave him *this* while we were exiled. And they have held it ever since—the pick of our heritage—the jewel in the lotus. Often we have asked it back—often taken it. But because they married into the Fife Wemysses—yes, even this last of them, they have always retaken and held it to our despite!"

The boy on the stile, sprawling and thinking of something else (for he had heard all this fifty times before), yawned.

"Well, there's plenty more—why worry, grandfather?" he said, fanning himself with the blue velvet college cap that had a bright gold badge in front.

The old man started as if stung. He frowned and blinked like an angry bald eagle.

"There speaks the common wash of Whiggish blood. MacBryde will out!—No Raincy would thus have sold his birthright for a mess of pottage."

The eyes of the lad were still indolent, but also somewhat impudent in schoolboy fashion, as he answered, "Still, grandfather, mother's MacBryde money has paid off a good many Raincy—encumbrances, don't you call them here?—mortgages is the name for them in England! And more than that, don't go back and worry mother about these old cow-pastures. You know you are really very fond of her. As for me, I may not be a real Raincy, for I was born to do something in life, not to idle through it. You won't let me go into the navy, and fight as a man ought. If I go into the army, we shall have mother in a permanent fit. So I must just stop on and lend a hand where I can, till I am old enough to turn out that thief of an estate agent of yours and do something to help you—really I mean!"

"Remember you are a Raincy by name, whatever you may be by nature," said the old man. Suddenly the boy stood up straight and firm before him, with a dourness on his face which was clearly not akin to the swoop and dash of his vulturine grandfather.

"If you don't let me do as I like here—do something

real which will show that I have not been to school and the university for nothing, I shall go straight to the ship-building yard and get my uncle, mother's brother David, to take me on as an apprentice! We still own enough of the business to make him ready to do that."

Like one who hears and rebukes blasphemy, the old man made a gesture of despair with his hands, as though abandoning his grandson to his own evil courses, and then turned on his heel and walked slowly away towards the Castle.

. . . . . .

With a sigh of relief the young man stretched himself luxuriously out on the broad triple plank of the stile, and drew from his pocket a brass spy-glass which he had been itching to make use of for the past ten minutes. He also had his reasons for being interested in the Ferris properties which lay beneath him, every field and dyke and hedgerow, every curve of coast and curvet of breaking wave as clear and near as if he could have touched them merely by reaching out his finger. But Louis Raincy nourished no historical wraths nor feudal jealousies.

"I am sorry the old fellow is savage with me," he muttered as he looked about to make sure that his grandfather was not turning round to forgive him, "I'm sure I don't mean to make him angry. I promise mother every day. But why he wants to be for ever trotting out a grievance four hundred years old—hang me if I see. Anyway, Dame Comfort will soon put him all right. He gets on with her—he and I never hit it off . . . quite. I fear I wasn't born lordly, even though my father was a Raincy. They say he disgraced his family by being an artist, and that it was when he was painting Dame Comfort's portrait that—oh, I say, there's Patsy, or I'm the son of a Dutchman!"

As only the moment before he had been declaring himself the son of a De Raincy, this could hardly be. So there was good prima facie evidence that, in Louis's opinion, there *was* Patsy, whoever Patsy might be.

In a moment he had the spy-glass to his eye. He stilled the boyish flailing of his legs in the air as he lay prone on the stile-top, leaning on his elbows, and intently studying something that flashed and was lost among the birches that shaded the path up the glen of the Abbey Burn.

"Patsy it is, by Jove of the Capitol!" he proclaimed triumphantly, and shutting up the brass telescope with a facile snap of sliding tubes, he slipped it into his pocket and sprang off the stile. In three seconds he was on Ferris territory—and a trespasser. Louis Raincy was quick, impulsive, with fair Norse hair blown in what the country folk called a "birse" about his face, and dark-blue western eyes—the eyes of the island MacBrydes who had built ships to ride the sea, and whose younger branches had captained and made fortunes out of far sea adventuring. So with the thoroughness of these same privateer shipbuilders, Louis precipitated himself down the steep breakneck cliff, catching the trunk of a pine here, or snatching at a birch and swinging right round it there to keep his speed from becoming a mere avalanche, till at last, breathed a little and with a scraped hand, of which he took not the slightest notice, he stood on the winding, hide-and-seek path which meanders along the side of the Abbey Burn, at it were, keeping step with it.

The pines stood about still and solemn. The light breeze from the sea made no difference to them, but the birches quivered, blotting the white of the path with myriads of purple splashes, none of which were distinct or ever for a second stood still, criss-crossing and melting one into the other, all equally a-dither with excitement.

Louis checked for a moment to breathe and listen. He said to himself that Patsy, for whose sake he had torn through the underbrush at the imminent danger of life and limb, was still far away down the glen.

"I shall go a bit farther till I find a snug corner and then—wait for Patsy!"

What Louis Raincy meant was that he would find a

place equally sheltered from the eyes of his grandfather and from possible spies in the front windows of Cairn Ferris, the quiet ivy-grown house at the head of the glen, against which his grandfather had hurled so many anathemas in vain.

At last he found his place—a chosen nook. The sound of voices would be drowned by the splash of the little waterfall. The pool into which it fell was deep enough to keep any one from breaking in upon them too suddenly, and through a rift in the leaves a piece of bluest sky peered down. White of waterfall, sleepy brown of pool, dusky under an eyelash of bracken, and blue of sky—Patsy, who noticed all things, would like that.

But Patsy did not come. Could she have passed and he not seen? Clearly not, for Louis had come downhill as fast as a big boulder set a-rolling. What, then, could she be doing?

Ah, who could ever tell what Patsy might be doing or call her to account afterwards for the deed? Louis only knew that he dared not even try. All the same he left his nook with some disrelish—it would have been so capital a conjuncture to have met her just there, and he had taken such pains! However, there was no choice. He must go to seek Patsy if Patsy would not come to him.

She was returning from her daily lesson at her uncle Julian's. He knew that she would most likely have a book under her arm and an ashplant in her hand. She would come along quietly, whistling low to herself, tickling the tails of the trout in the shallows with her stick and laughing aloud as they scudded away into the Vandyke-brown shadows of the bank.

The glen opened out a little and Louis paused at the corner, standing still in shadow.

Twenty yards away Patsy was talking to a young man in a shabby grey suit, a broad blue bonnet set on his head, and they were conferring profoundly over a book which Patsy held in her hands. The young man in the shabby suit appeared to be instructing Patsy, or at least explain-

ing a difficult passage, which he did with more zeal and gusto than Louis cared about.

He knew him in a moment, for of course the heir of Raincy knew everybody within thirty miles.

"Only Frank Airie, the Poor Scholar!" he said to himself, his jealousy melting like a summer cloud, "of course—what a fool I was. He's on his way home from teaching the Auchenmore brats. Though it is a miracle that he should happen to cross the glen at the same point exactly. Perhaps he had a spy-glass, too!"

What Louis noticed most of all was the pretty shape of Patsy's small head, the dense quavering blackness of the little curls that frothed about her brow, and the side-long way she had of appealing to the giant who bent over her with his finger on the line of Virgil he was expounding.

Presently with a squaring of the shoulders and a grasp at the blue bonnet which lifted it clear of his head, the Poor Scholar strode away. He crossed the Abbey Burn in a couple of leaps, his feet hardly seeming to touch the stones, and in a moment more his tall figure was hoisting itself up the opposite bank, his hands grasping rock and tree-trunk, root and dry bent-grass indiscriminately, till presently, without once turning round, he was out of sight.

Louis Raincy detached himself from the rock by which he had stood silent during the interview with the Poor Scholar. He swung himself lightly up into the Y-shaped crotch of a willow that overhung the big pool.

The girl came along, her lips moving as she repeated the words of the passage she had just had explained. Then Louis Raincy whistled an air well known to both of them, "Can ye sew cushions, can ye sew sheets?"

Instantly the girl looked up, turning a vivid, scarlet-lipped face, crowned with a ripple of ink-black locks, to the notch of the willow, and said easily, "Hillo, Louis Raincy! What are you doing here, a mile off your own ground?"

"Watching you turn the head of that poor boy Francis Airie!"

"His head will not turn so easy as yours, Louis, lad," Patsy retorted, "there is a deal more in it!"

Louis Raincy was not in any way put out. Of course Patsy was different. You never knew in the least what she was going to say, and it would have grieved him exceedingly not to be abused. He would have been sure, either that the girl was sickening for a serious illness, or that he had mortally offended her.

"How did you leave the Wise Uncle this morning?" he asked, with a nod of his head in the direction of the house by the Abbey Burnfoot. Both had begun to climb a little way up out of the path by the waterside. They did so without any words. It was the regular order of things, as they both knew. For in the valley bottom Uncle Julian or Adam Ferris might come round the corner upon them in a moment, and being young, they wanted to talk without restraint. Besides, there was a constant coming and going of messengers between the two houses. A carriage road led along the highway to the cliffs, and then bent sharply down steep zig-zags to the stables of the Abbey, but all ordinary intercourse between the houses was conducted along the footpath by the Abbey Burn.

"Uncle Julian," said the girl, as if continuing some former conversation, "is quite different from father. He has seen the world and can tell tales of black savages and Arab chiefs and piracy in the China seas. But father has just lived in his own house of Cairn Ferris all his life. You know he called me Patricia after my mother—Patricia Wemyss Ferris. Oh, not even your grandfather is better known than my father. They made him a justice of the peace, too, but because he can do no good to the poor folk against the great landlords, he mostly stays at home. You know our house? From the outside—yes, of course. Well, when your grandfather will let you, you shall know it from the inside too. But not till then. Oh, it is big, roomy and quite comfortable, and though it would not hold an army like Castle Raincy, it is quite big enough to get lost in."

"Of course," said Raincy, vaguely feeling the necessity of defending himself and those who were his, "if it were not for grandfather and his wretched old feud, mother and I would come and see you to-morrow. She is—well, she would love you!"

"Would she, I doubt?" said Patsy, giving her bonnet a vicious jerk to bid it stay on her head, "mothers seldom like those whom their sons——"

"Adore!" put in Louis Raincy smilingly.

"Out, traitor!" cried the girl with a quick, scornful upthrow of the chin, "it is the smile that saves you, Louis, lad. Easy it is to see that you have had little experience of talking to women, when you come firing off words that ought to mean great things into the middle of a talk about smuggling cases and justices of the peace."

"But I do mean——" began Louis, preparing to take solemn oath.

"You mean nothing of the sort, and well it is for you, little boy. Quiet, now, and listen! I am a Pict—yes, I, Patsy Ferris! Uncle Julian says so. I am (so he tells me) a throwback to my grandmother's folk who were Fingauls—and her father the Laird of Kirkmaiden was the chief of them. That is why I do nothing, say nothing, think nothing like a scone-faced maid of the Scots. I am centuries older than they. If it ever arrives to me to fall in love with any man—it seems impossible, but Uncle Julian says it will come—it is I who will seek that man and make him love me, and if he ever leaves me or is untrue, I shall kill him. For that is the way of the Fingaul. Uncle Julian says so."

As she explained her lot in life Patsy was peeling and eating a sappy root of rush which she had plucked. With this and a piece of clear brown gum, the exudation of a smooth-barked wild cherry tree, she made a delicious repast. She offered his share to Louis, who was in no mood for frivolities. In spite of his smile he had been hurt to the quick. But Patsy was perfectly calm, and having fixed a large lump of cherry gum on a thorn, she licked

round and round it with relish, occasionally holding it between her eye and the twinkle of the sun to see the effect of the deep amber hue.

Still she was circumspect, and when a figure in grey appeared tramping sturdily up the glen swinging a stick, she nudged her companion into sulky kind of attention.

"Uncle Julian," she said, after the tall clean-shaved man had turned the corner. "I wish you could see his house—properly, I mean, not just from the road."

"I have seen it from the sea!" said Louis, still grumpily.

"And that is no wise way to see it. There are always gentlemen of the Free Trade hanging about in the offing these days, and if they thought that the heir of Raincy was spying on them—well, they might take the liberty of throwing him overboard to sink or swim."

"But surely your uncle has nothing to do with smuggling or smugglers? My grandfather says that it is no business for a gentleman to dip his fingers in!"

"Your grandfather says a great many other things to which you do not pay great heed—else you would not be sitting here looking as gloomy as the raven that croaked when the old cow wouldn't die. No, sir, you would be sitting up on the stile yonder, cursing the Ferrises with bell, book and candle—and the old man helping you out when you forgot the words."

The girl went on sucking her cherry-gum without the least concern as to whether Louis Raincy was hurt in his feelings or no. If he were, the obvious alternative was before him. He could return to Castle Raincy the way he had come. About this or about him Patsy gave herself no trouble.

Indeed, Patsy gave herself no trouble about anything or anybody, and so accustomed herself to the management of men. Women, she knew, were different.

CHAPTER II

THE MAIDENS' COVE

Castle Raincy was a great lord's mansion, and the best of the neighbouring county folk were glad of a rare invitation there. Cairn Ferris was the ancient home of an ancient family, the house of a "bonnet" laird, but then the feather in the side of the Ferris bonnet had always been worn very proudly and gallantly indeed.

Abbey Burnfoot was the picturesque modern fancy of a cultured man of the world, who had come thither to live his life between his books, his paintings, his music, and the eternally fresh wash of the sea in the little white bay of pebble and shell underneath his windows.

But half a mile or a little more over the heuchs stood the farm of Glenanmays, which, with two or three smaller holdings and his own farm of Cairn Ferris, constituted the whole landed estate of Adam Ferris. The Garlands of Glenanmays had been holders of that farm and liegemen of Cairn Ferris almost from the days when the first Ferris settled on that noble brace of seaward-looking valleys, through which the Mays Water and the Abbey Burn trundled, roared and soughed to the sea.

The early years of the nineteenth century looked on no more characteristic farmhouse than that where dwelt Diarmid Garland and his brood, on the bank above the swift-running water-race which turned the corn-mill with such deftness that people came from as far as Stranryan to admire.

A large farm it was, needing many hands to work it, byre, stable, plough-lands, hill pasture, flat and heathery in appearance and outline, but satisfactory for

sheep-feeding—that was Glenanmays. Diarmid had three sons and four daughters, with most of whom this history must one time or another concern itself.

Diarmid also was no mean citizen of any state, hard to be driven, temperate, humorous and dour. He held for the old ways, and each day presided at meals, his bonnet of blue on his head, broad as a barrow-wheel, and brought all the way from Kilmarnock. All the rest of the table sat bareheaded—the sons and daughters whom God had given him, as well as the hired servant, and even the stranger within his gates.

For at Glenanmays there was no master but old Diarmid Garland. To each man and maid there was set down a plate of earthenware, a horn spoon, a knife and fork—that is, for all who fed at the high table, over which the blue Kilmarnock bonnet of the master presided. For the minute or so while he said grace or "returned thanks," Diarmid took off his bonnet, but resumed it the moment after. He doffed this blue crown of his to God alone, and even his liege lord, Adam Ferris, had to content himself with a hand carried half military fashion to its weather-beaten brim.

When Adam dined, as he often did, at the bountiful table of Glenanmays, he also found his horn spoon, his knife and fork beside his plate, and he was always careful to set his hat, his riding-whip and his gloves and cape behind the door. Then, bareheaded, he took his place on the right hand of his host at the long oaken table, to which in due order came son, daughter, house-maiden, out-lass, ploughman and herd. The only difference was that when it came to the blessing upon the food to be partaken of, Adam the Laird stood up, while the others sat still with bowed heads. Why this was, no one knew, not even Adam or Diarmid. But so it had been in the time of their fathers, and so it would continue till there was not a Ferris in Cairn Ferris—a time which neither liked to consider—for the same thought came to both—how that Patsy being an heiress, Patsy would marry,

and the lands that had so long been those of Ferris of Cairn Ferris would pass to children of another name.

At the end of the long red-tiled kitchen in which the family meals were served opened out a sort of back-kitchen to which a wooden extension had been added. It was a sort of Court of the Young Lions, where herd-boys, out-workers of the daily-wage sort, turnip-singlers, Irish harvesters, Stranryan "strappers" and "lifters," crow-boys and all the miscellany of a Galloway farm about the end of the Napoleonic wars ate from wooden platters, with only their own horn spoon and pocket-knife to aid their nimble fingers. There was no complaint, for Glenanmays was "a grand meat house," and with the broth served without stint and the meats rent asunder by the hands of the senior ploughman, the Young Lions did very well.

If quarrels arose, the senior ploughman kept a stick of grievous crab-tree handy, and was not loath to use it. Usually, however, his voice upraised in threatening sufficed. For Rob Dickson could stir the Logan Stone with his little finger. He had escaped from the press-gang on his way from Stanykirk Sacrament, and had carried away the slash of a cutlass with him, the scar of which was plain to be seen of all, beginning as it did a little below his ear and running to the point of the shoulder-blade. This made the prestige of Rob Dickson notable, especially among the Irish. Had he not resisted authority? So of him chiefly they sought counsel and direction—so much so that old Diarmid, quick to notice what made for the good of his farm, caused Rob Dickson to act as a kind of "grieve" during the time of harvest, when the land was overrun with "Islanders," "Paddies" and "Paipes" —for the religious hatred, though never crossing the North Channel, has yet made of the Irish Catholic in Wigtonshire a hewer of wood and a drawer of water to his Presbyterian masters.

Few things Adam Ferris liked better than a look at the Court of the Lions during feeding time, when Rob Dickson

rose in his place to salute him and the Young Lions bent lower over their wooden platters, "eating away like murther" lest any neighbour should get ahead of them in the race. When their own proper broth was finished and the flesh sodden in it had all been distributed, the Young Lions were made free of the debris of the high table, and never were bones cleaned with greater dispatch. Scarce did those which were saved for the rough-tailed, soft-eyed collies, waiting expectant outside, emerge with a higher polish. The herds had to see to this final distribution themselves, each feeding his own pair at different corners of the yard, ready to check growlings which might end in fights with the stern toe of a mountain boot, very proper to the purpose.

Even oftener than her father, Patsy came to Glenanmays. It was good to get away from the dear but dull house of Cairn Ferris, the schooled and disciplined servants, the gentle but constant and masterful supervision of her old nurse, Annie McQuilliam.

She loved her home. She loved all who were in it. But there was no one of her own age at Cairn Ferris, and here at Glenanmays she could dip deep in the fountain of youth. Of the four girls, Faith and Elspeth were her seniors, and she looked up to them, sitting at their feet and keeping her secrets as carefully from them as she would have done from her own father.

But the third, Jean, a tall slight girl with head coiled about by swathes of fair hair, was year for year, month for month, Patsy's own age. And neither had any secrets from the other. Hopes, fears, anticipations were exchanged, but cautiously and in whispers, like young bathers who test the chill of the sea with bent, temerarious toes. So they touched and paused, shivering on the brink of the incoming tide of life.

Ménie Garland, the youngest of all, was then a slim girl still at Stranryan Grammar School, with the softest eyes and the most wonderful voice, round-throated and full-chested even at the ungrateful age of fourteen.

Not the three brothers Garland, Fergus, Stair and Agnew, stalwart and brown, nor yet the two elder girls—not little Ménie coming singing like a linnet over the moor, brought Patsy so often that way. But the quiet talks with Jean—Jean who had learned wisdom from her sisters' love affairs, from the escapades of her brothers, and who, by the rude rule of fact, could reduce to cautious verity the fiction which Patsy had learned from her Uncle Julian's books.

So Patsy went often to Glenanmays, and without interrupting the busy round of the afternoon's duties, prescribed by Diarmid for each member of his family, she made her way to the little shed hidden by the burnside, on the green in front of which the clothes-lines were strung, and clean garments fluttered in the sea-wind, fresh and glad as ship's bunting.

"Yes," Jean Garland would say after the girls had kissed one another, "I was up early this morning—soon after dawn. Madge Blair and I had our arms in the tubs by half-past three, and she had got the pot to boil before that. So now I am ready for the ironing, and——"

"Oh, let me help!" cried Patsy.

"Very well," Jean acquiesced, "you are getting to be none so ill with the goffering iron and the pliers——"

"Better with the fancy than the plain!" laughed Patsy.

"It is to be expected, you have the light hand, and you have taste—most have neither one nor the other, but iron for all the world like a roller going over a wet field."

They worked a while in silence, only looking up occasionally and smiling at each other, or Jean might throw in a hint as to a frill or tucker which must be dealt with in a particular way.

Suddenly Jeanie Garland came nearer, a pile of folded linen over her arm.

"Have you heard anything of the pressgang at your house, Patsy?"

"Nothing," said Patsy, busy with a best Sunday cap,

all lace frills and furbelows; "of course there is always Captain Laurence at Stranryan. On clear nights you can hear his fifes and drums by standing on the stile above our house, and they say there is a King's ship or two about Belfast Lough—but why do you ask?"

Jean Garland paused yet nearer to Patsy and spoke in her ear.

"It's the lads!" she murmured. "They are in it. I am feared for them."

"What?" exclaimed Patsy, but checked by a glance she instantly lowered her voice—"not Fergus and Stair and Agnew?"

Jean nodded slightly.

"Does their father know?" Patsy whispered back. Jean preserved a grave face.

"Not any one of us, his own family, can guess what Diarmid Garland knows and does not know. He had his time of the Free Trading. He was at the head of it, and if the boys head a clean run from the Dutch coast or the Isle of Man—why, if father is ignorant of the business, it is because he wishes to be."

"But there is nothing new in all that," said Patsy; "there have always been smugglers and shore lads who helped them—always King's cutters and preventive men to chase and lose them—what danger do the boys run more than at other times?"

"This," said Jean Garland, very gravely, "there is a new superintendent of enlistments at Stranraer. He is just a spy, one Eben McClure from Stonykirk, a man of our own country. He works with the preventive superintendent, and when they cannot or dare not meddle with the cargo-runners, as they dare not with my brothers, they set the press upon them—and the soldiers' press is the worst by far."

No more was said. The girls worked quietly for an hour till all was finished. The hedges and clothes-lines were cleared of their burden, and with a whisper of "Shall we go down to the cove—the tide is nearly full,"

the girls slipped each a cotton gown and a towel apiece into Patsy's little reticule and made off to the bathing cove, a well-hidden nook of sand, half cavern, half high shell-bank, which bygone tides had excavated in the huge flank of the Black Head. Fergus and his brothers knew about it, of course, and saw to it that none about the farm interfered with the girls at their play.

In a minute their young figures were lost among the birches of the valley, a wider and an opener one than that of the Abbey Burn, the banks higher and farther off, and from their ridges giving glimpses of the distant Mull of Galloway and the blue shores of Ireland.

They kept in the bottom of the glen, splashing and springing from stone to stone, with mirthful enjoyment of each other's slips. Far off on a heathery knoll Diarmid watched them go. He had noted the swift intaking of the white cleading on the hedges, the disappearance of fluttering garmentry from the clothes-lines. He approved of young people enjoying themselves, *after* their work was done—Diarmid's emphasis on the "after" was strong.

As they went Jean Garland pointed out a pony track high on the fells. "Careless fellows," she said, "that must have been Stair's band. For both Fergus and Agnew are more careful!"

Indeed, the trail by which the laden ponies had passed was still clearly evident, and Jean was roused to anger against the headstrong brother who had risked bringing all about the house into trouble.

"The others went by the bed of the burn," she said, "why could not Stair?"

Looking seaward, they saw all things more clearly than usual—the pause before a storm from the west, prophesied Jean Garland. The island at the Abbey Burnfoot divided itself into two peaks. They could see the houses at Donnahadee, and the boats turning sharply about to make for Belfast Lough, showing a sudden broadside of white canvas as they did so. But little they minded. At

present the sky was glorious, the sea a mirror, and here was the Maidens' Cove, into which they dipped from the cliff edge, as suddenly as a kite swoops from the sky. In a moment they were lost to sight, and only the tinkle of their laughter among the blue, purple and creamy reflected lights of the cove told where they were.

Outside the sheltered sea rocked and laved the sands with a pleasant swishing invitation. Presently they looked out from the low mouth of the cove. All seemed still and lonely, and they were about to step down into the clear green water of the Atlantic, when a noise came to their ears. It was the sound of men rowing—many men, and many men at that time and place meant the pinnace of King's ship. The thought of Stair's careless bridle-track high on the heathery side of the fell tortured the mind of his sister. What could they want? It was too early in the day for any surprise work in the interests of the Excise. There were no smuggling cellars near to search—but at that moment the girls of one accord drew in their heads. They moved stealthily into the dark of the cove. Here they could not be observed, but they could see a boat's crew of seamen which went past rapidly in the direction of Abbey Burnfoot, the salt water sparkling in a rain of silver and pearl from the oars, and an officer sitting spick and span at the tiller-ropes.

The next moment they were gone and in the clear submerged dark of the purple dulse that shaded the cavern mouth the girls looked at one another with dismay in their eyes.

"Can they be going to take Uncle Julian?" said Patsy.

"Uncle Julian—no," exclaimed Jean Garland, "of course not—what would they be doing with a learned man and a gentleman? It is that silly Stair who has set them on the track of my brothers. They will land at the Burnfoot and catch them all at the Bothy of Blairmore, where they gather to take their "four hours"—I must run and warn them——"

"Jean," said Patsy, "I can run two yards for your

one. Lend me your scarf and I shall go and warn the lads."

"You—the laird's daughter!"

"Yes, I," said Patsy, girding her waist with the red sash, and looking to the criss-crossed ties of the bathing-sandals her uncle had given her out of his store of foreign things. Her kilted skirt came but a little way below her knee and her blouse of fine blue linen let her arms be seen to the elbow. Patsy looked more Pictish than ever thus, with a loose blown tassel of ink-black hair on her brow. Jean offered some faint objections but did not persist. After all, it was the main thing that the lads should be warned in time.

So Patsy, trim and slim as your forefinger with a string of red tied about it, sped eastward over the hills to the Bothy of Blairmore.

CHAPTER III

THE BOTHY

Patsy had always been a wonderful runner. She could outpace her pony. She could flee from Louis Raincy like the shadow of a wind-blown cloud crossing a mountain-side, and on the sands with none but Jean Garland to see, Patsy could fleet it along the wet tide wash, sending the spray about her as a swallow that skims a pond and flirts the surface with its wings.

Old Diarmid mounted on the stile, balanced himself with his staff, and looked. The dogs accompanying him cocked their ears in hopes of a chase, but the next moment, their keen senses telling them that it was only Patsy running over the heather, they settled down, marvelling that men could be so strong with foot and hand and yet know so little.

There was half a mile to be run along the sands before turning up over the hot glacier-planed stones of the moor. Diarmid Garland watched and wondered. He had often seen Patsy giving his daughter Jean, of the heavier and slower-moving blonde Scandinavian blood, half the distance to Saythe Point and then passing her as an arrow may miss and pass one who flees. Now she moved like a leaf blown by the hurricane. Her white feet in their sandals of yellow leather of Corinth hardly seemed to touch the sand. Then Patsy turned up the crumbling cliffs at their lowest point, mounting like a goat with an effortless ease till she crowned the causeway of seaworn rock and plunged to the armpits into the tall heather of the Wild of Blairmore.

Then Diarmid lost sight of the girl for a minute, but when he saw her again she was far out on the perilous

goat-track which led down to the bothy itself. Diarmid scanned the distance with his eye—he knew the length of time it would have taken a hillsman to go from point to point.

"That girl is a miracle," he muttered to himself, "she can run through deep heather as fast as on the sand of the sea-shore."

He was wrong, however. She was only a Pictess, with some thousand years of the heather instinct in her blood. Her body was lithe and supple, her foot light, and her eye sure. Besides she could hear what was hidden and unheard at the stile on which Diarmid stood, the *rock-rock* of the short, steady navy stroke, which was pulling the landing-party from His Majesty's ship *Britomart* nearer and nearer to the Bothy of Blairmore.

Then she passed quite out of sight. She had a long descent before her, sheltered seaward, so that she did not need to consider the danger of being seen by the enemy. The leather of her sandals pattered like rain on dry leaves on the narrow, twisted sheep-tracks, then mounted springily over the bulls'-fell of the knolls of stunted heather, and as it were in the clapping of a pair of hands, she appeared at the door of the Bothy of Blairmore, scarce heated, quite unbreathed, but with grave face and anxious eyes.

"Scatter!" she commanded, clapping her hands. "Off with you, lads! Take to the hills. The press-gang is landing at this moment at the Abbey Burnfoot to cut you off. Eben McClure is with them. He has heard of your cargo-running and he wants to send you all to the wars."

"And what will *you* do?" said Stair, who was always the boldest in speech as he was the most reckless in action.

"I—oh, pray don't give yourself the least trouble about me, Stair Garland. I shall stay here and wash the dishes."

The lads were declaring that under no circumstances should she remain where she was, but Patsy had made up

her mind. She must see what a press-gang was like. She would see and speak with the officers who were at the head of it. Perhaps they had their side to it also, which would be worth the finding out. And the spy—she had never seen a spy, a marker-down of men—so she resolved to see this Eben McClure, the most hated man in all Wigtonshire. She would stay, and it was with a certain imperiousness that she ordered the boys away.

They went reluctantly, but they knew that because she was the daughter of a magistrate and a laird, nothing serious would happen to her, while they risked life and liberty every moment they stayed.

"Do you think I ran all the way from the bathing cove for nothing?" she said. "Save yourselves, lads. Do as I bid you and at once."

They went, though it was not with the best grace in the world. Stair wore a scowl on his handsome face as he slung his gun over his shoulder. Only Fergus thanked her for having come to warn them.

"Hold your tongue," said Patsy, peremptorily, "get out of sight. Keep yourselves safe. That is the best thanks, and all that I ask for from you."

. . . . . .

So it came about that fifteen minutes later, Lieutenant Everard of the *Britomart*, disembarking with Captain Laurence of the Dragoons and the Superintendent of Enlistments, Mr. Ebenezer McClure, came upon a picture framed in the doorway of the Bothy of Blairmore. Patsy had spread Jean Garland's scarlet sash to its broadest, and so had been able to let down her skirt of blue linen till it came to almost her ankles, above which the yellow cross-gartering of the sandals was diamonded in the Greek fashion her Uncle Julian had taught her.

Patsy had found piles of unwashen dishes and spoons, for the boys of the Glenanmays family depended for cleaning up upon uncertain, semi-occasional visits, from one or other of their sisters. What they wanted at the time they took out and washed in the pleasant tumble of the hill

brook which passed their door on its way down to meet the Abbey Burn a little above Uncle Julian's house. The rest they left.

The two officers of His Majesty stood a moment too astonished for speech. This was not at all what they had come out to find, nor what their men had been posted all about the bothy to secure in case of an attempt to escape.

Patsy nodded brightly to her visitors and the officers saluted without, however, abandoning their gravity. The third man, a long, lean, hook-nosed fellow with curly black hair plastered about his brow and tied in a greasy fall of ringlets on his shoulders, frowned and growled. He had understood at once that the game was up. If the authority had been his, he would have had the sailors and marines scouring the hillside and searching every rift in the rocks.

"May I ask you," said Captain Laurence, a tall, good-looking, blond officer, bowing to Patsy, "where the young men Garland are to be found? We had come with warrants for their taking. This is His Majesty's press."

"Ah," said Patsy easily, "so you are the press-gang—let me look at you. I have never seen a 'press' before. Where are your handcuffs? Which of you is the chief executioner? You tie up the poor fellows, they tell me."

"I must ask you to explain your presence here," said Captain Laurence, who had grown hot all over at being spoken to in this fashion.

"This is the Maid Marian of the gang," suggested Lieutenant Everard of the *Britomart*, with a sneer. "I have seen something like this get up in the Gulf of Corinth."

"Then you are a lucky man," said the captain of dragoons; "all the same I must ask you to account for your presence here, young lady."

"Rather might I ask you to explain yours," said Patsy, breathing on a glass, rubbing it, and holding it up to the light. "You are trespassing on my father's ground—and from what I see of your arms, in pursuit of game!"

"And who is your father, madame?"

"I have quite as good a right to ask you for the name of yours!"

The officers laughed and glanced at each other.

"Not quite," said the dragoon; "you observe that we are on special duty——"

"I should indeed hope so," said Patsy, standing up with her drying-cloth in her hand and shaking it contemptuously at them. "Special duty, indeed, that means the chasing of honest men and honest men's sons at the bidding of spies!"

"It is a duty which I perform as seldom as possible," said Captain Laurence. "Naturally I would rather be fighting the foes of my king and country, but as to that I am not consulted. Besides, the naval and military forces of the realm must be recruited in some way or other!"

"I should have thought that treating men like criminals was not the best way to make brave soldiers of them!"

"Tell us your father's name," broke in Lieutenant Everard, a small dark man, very nervous and restless, with eyes that winked continually and impatient fingers that fiddled endlessly with the tassel of his sword-hilt. "We will not be put off longer. The men are escaping all the time while you are left here to hold us in talk. If he be, as you say, a gentleman and a magistrate, he will give us assistance in our search, according to his oath."

"My father's name is Adam Ferris, of Cairn Ferris," said Patsy, pleasantly. "But whether he will be at your service or not, I cannot tell. As for me, if you are the gallant gentlemen you look, you will bring me a pailful of fresh water from the spring—see, yonder at the foot of the rock—ah, thank you!"

"Captain, we are wasting valuable time," insinuated Eben McClure, the superintendent of recruitment, touching the officer lightly on the arm.

"Keep your dirty fingers off my sleeve, sir, and go to the devil. I command here. Miss Ferris, I beg your pardon. I may as well fetch a pair when I am about it."

Captain Laurence had noticed that the second pail contained very little water. So with a quick heave he sent a shining spout in the direction of the spy, who was drenched from knee to shoe-buckle. Then he caught up the pails with a clash of their iron handles and with the easiest swagger in the world took the direction of the spring, his spurs jingling as he went. A sailor on guard behind the rock would have aided him to fill them, but he told the man to keep his station, and dipped for himself. He brought them back brimming and with a courtly bow inquired of Patsy if she had any further commands for him, because if not he must go about the duties of his service.

Patsy thanked him with the distinctive simplicity of one who has officers of dragoons to carry water for her every day of her life. But she went to the door and showed Captain Laurence the way over the ridges to the house of Cairn Ferris. "My father is likely to be at home," she said, "but if you do not find him, he is sure to be at my Uncle Julian's at the Abbey. You have only to follow the glen."

"Your uncle?" said Captain Laurence, "your father's brother?"

"No, my mother's," said Patsy. "Mr. Julian Wemyss of Auchenyards and Wellwood—and the best man in the world—the wisest too!"

"I shall have pleasure in making the acquaintance of your uncle—his family (and that of your mother) is from my part of Scotland."

He bowed low and withdrew. The lieutenant of the *Britomart* and the Superintendent of Enlistments were in a state of incipient lunacy. Oh, the fool! They would break him if they could. They would write to the Secretary. They would—but as they growled and cursed behind him, Eben McClure suddenly remembered that Julian Wemyss and my Lord Erskine were first cousins, and that so long as the government remained in office, it would be advisable to stand well with all friends and

neighbours of the Secretary, Erskines, Wemysses, Melvilles, wherever found. He was unpopular enough in the country as it was. He could not afford to be "ill seen" at head-quarters as well.

Patsy found herself left alone in the bothy. But she knew that the two men who had not spoken would certainly leave some hidden spy to watch whether the young men returned, or if she attempted to communicate with them.

Therefore she did not hasten. Jean would arrive before long with the garments in which she had left home, and which she had shed, as it were providentially, to be able to run the better across the sands of Killantringan and the heathery fastnesses of the Wild of Blairmore.

Hardly had Patsy gotten the bothy to her liking—or something like it—when Jean arrived, full of wonder and joy. She carried a parcel under her arm, done up carefully in her neckerchief.

"It is a pity to change," she said, "you will never look so pretty again!"

And she detailed with the admiration of generous youth the beauty of the black locks, waved tightly about the small head, the pale blue linen gown girt with the sash of scarlet silk, and the crossed-gartered sandals, showing Patsy's brown skin and pretty ankles half-way to the knee.

"It is a great shame," she repeated, "that you can't go about like that all the time."

"I shall think it over," said Patsy; "but if I went to the kirk on Sabbath dressed as you would have me, I believe Mr. MacCanny would have me turned out."

"Yes," said the loyal Jean, "because nobody would be able to attend to his sermon for looking at you!"

"But what are the lads going to do?"

"Oh," said Jean, "they have two or three places handy for lying up in. They are snug by this time. At least Fergus and Agnew are. Stair I met on my way here. He was lurking in a moss-hag with his gun ready for the first red-coat or blue-jacket who should lift a hand to you."

"Send him off to join the rest," said Patsy more seriously. "I never was in the least danger, and there is no doubt but that the man McClure has left some of his rascals to watch the bothy."

"Then High Heaven help them if they come across Stair and his blunderbuss. He will bring them down like so many partridges. Not even father can manage Stair. He will take orders from no one, except in matters of the farm. He is a good boy, and has great influence among the young fellows, for he will stick at nothing. But he is easily angered, proud, and often both reckless and desperate. You may be sure that he will not leave you till he sees you safe in your own valley and among your own people."

Patsy heard this with outward impatience, but like every girl, with something also of inward pride. She smiled at what Louis Raincy would have to say to this constant watchfulness, and how she herself would like it when next Louis and she climbed up to their "Nest" for one of their long talks. Would Louis be in danger from the bullets of the arrogant Stair?

She wondered if what Uncle Julian said could indeed be true—that though the men's secret of the heather ale had been lost, the women of the Picts would keep theirs and whistle men to heel, as sheep-dogs follow their masters. Uncle Julian said that she had in her the blood of Boadicea, who once on a day was a queen of the Picts far to the south.

But, after all, Uncle Julian jested so often, even when he appeared most serious, that you could not tell whether he meant it or no.

It would be nice if it were true, thought Patsy, but, after all, just because Uncle Julian said so did not make it true.

. . . . . .

"Your daughter, sir," said Lieutenant Everard, half an hour later, "has aided the escape of three young men, all deeply implicated in breaking the laws of the land."

It was in the ancient hall of Cairn Ferris that Adam, tall, black and solemn, was receiving unexpected visitors.

The hall, oak-beamed and still lighted mainly by tall, narrow windows, originally slotted for arrow and blunderbuss, was discouraging for men in search of the support of a modern justice of the peace.

The chief of a clan, some of whose members had been cattle-lifting, might have received them so.

"What men? What laws?" demanded Adam Ferris.

"The young men Garland, sons of one of your tenants," said the officer; "and as for the laws, they are those of His Majesty's excise."

"Ah," said Adam, dryly, "pardon me. Your uniform misled me. From your dress I took you for a naval officer."

"And so I am," cried Lieutenant Everard indignantly; "of His Majesty's ship *Britomart*, presently cruising in these waters."

Adam Ferris bowed gravely, as one who receives valuable information.

"I congratulate you," he said. "As for the young men, Fergus, Stair and Agnew Garland, they are fine lads and a credit to the neighbourhood. I cannot imagine that they have anything more to do with the traffic of which you speak than I myself. But if they have been reported to you as guilty, I am prepared to take cognizance of the evidence. I presume you did not come here without a warrant."

"We need no warrant," said the Lieutenant. "I am in command of His Majesty's press."

The expression of Adam Ferris's face changed suddenly.

"My tenants and my tenants' sons are not subject to the press-gang. There are no sailors among them—no, nor yet any fishermen."

"Captain Laurence of the dragoons is with us, sir," interpolated Eben McClure, "he has a right to beat up for recruits for the land forces."

"Ah," said Adam, "at fairs and markets, with fife and drum—yes! But not all over my estate, nor yet to meddle with my tenantry."

"He has particular permission from Earl Raincy," said the spy.

"I am not Earl Raincy, nor are my lands his," quoth Adam Ferris; "but, by the way, where is this Captain Laurence of whom you speak?"

The question seemed to embarrass the two men. "He was with us," said the Lieutenant at last, "but having discovered some fancied kinship with your brother's family, he separated himself from us and went (as I believe) to his house of Abbey Burnfoot!"

"Then I hope he does not press Julian for the cavalry. His cousin, the Secretary, might have something to say to that!"

Altogether there was small change to be got out of Adam Ferris, and as they gathered their men and marched them off, they fell foul one of the other, the officer with his exercised sea-tongue having much the better of the word-strife. But presently they were friends again, both cursing Captain Laurence of the dragoons for deserting them in their time of need.

"I believe," said Lieutenant Everard, "that Laurence simply turned in his tracks and went back to that bothy to carry more water for the black-headed girl!"

This, however, was of little moment to the Superintendent of Enlistments, who had a bounty upon every pressed man safe drafted to headquarters or delivered on board ship.

"At any rate," he said, "we have lost our men, and we are little likely to see them again!"

The Lieutenant turned angrily upon him.

"You are thinking of your dirty dollars," he said bitterly. "It is for the sake of such as you that His Majesty's officers must be treated like huckstering excisemen by every dirty Scot who owns as much ground as a cow can turn round in! 'My estate!' 'My tenantry'—paugh, and the back of his hand to you because you are no better than an Englishman!"

"The Ferrises are an ill folk to come across!" insinuated the Superintendent of Enlistments.

Everard turned hotly upon his companion.

"And who brought us here to rub noses against rough stones climbing your accursed dykes, only to be insulted by country bumpkins and outwitted by half-clad minxes? You are a spy, and no fit company for gentlemen. I tell you so much to your face. But when you are in your own country and doing your foul business, you might at least have your information correct before calling out the forces of His Majesty."

And ten minutes later the boat of the *Britomart* was being rowed fast in the direction of that ship, because the men knew well that their officer was in no mood to be trifled with.

CHAPTER IV

BY FORCE OF ARMS

THE press-gang and its ugly work, Castle Raincy and its feudal associations, stern Cairn Ferris, the Abbey Burn and the bright new house of Julian Wemyss—Patsy going from one to the other, and the patriarchal simplicity of the farm of Glenanmays, with its girls and boys, its cave-riddled shore and its interests in the Free Traffic—these are what the district of the Back Shore meant in later Napoleonic times.

Most of this was on the surface, to be seen of all men, but the traffic and the "press" are only spoken of in whispers. As to them it is dangerous to appear too knowing.

Even great people were mysteriously tongue-tied. Silence was particularly golden in these days, and in the stillness of the night the little click of a sheep's trotters descending a mountain pathway was often mistaken for the clank of a scabbard point, or the clink of a gun-butt striking a loose stone.

Girls in moorland farms lay awake, half-fearing, half-hoping to hear the saddle-chains of the laden horses, each led by a lover or a brother.

King George might (and did) multiply officials and send what could be spared in the way of landing parties to support the executive, but the claims on the ministry were too many. They could only say, "Wait for a time of peace and then we will regulate the matter of the Solway free trade once for all."

But the most ignorant lad on the shore of Galloway from Loch Ryan to Annan Waterfoot knew that so long as the

government waged war against Napoleon and America, it had no time to attend to them. The press-gang was all they had to avoid, and for that they trusted to their clear eyes and nimble feet.

They were also well informed. So soon as a patrol cleared the Irishman's Port in Stranryan, or a boat's crew was seen making for the beach of any of the Back Shore coves, messengers, ragged and brown, sped inland to warn the farms and villages engaged in the business, or even those merely acting as recipients and depots. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, all men under forty-five disappeared from the fields. The teams found their own way homewards or stood still till they were loosed by girls hurrying out from the steadings.

"Patriotism," said Stair Garland, bitterly, "that is a fine word. But the fine patriots tie the lads they catch to rings in the wall of the Stranryan gaol. They lash them till the blood runs just to learn them not to complain, Don't tell me about glory. There was Rob Blair, who came back from Spain after his brother Maxwell had been flogged to death. He shot a general near Corunna—him they make a fuss about—he and half a dozen of his mates, and he told me the reason that Allingham keeps so far ahead of his own soldiers is that they are better shots than the French, who do not fire at him nearly so often."

True or not, this was the Galloway idea of soldiering during the later Napoleonic wars, and it was only after a bout of drunkenness at some fair that recruits could be looked for. Suicide was not uncommon after a few weeks of discipline, and many were drowned from the transport ships which took them to Vigo or the Tagus mouth.

Galloway has always been cut off from the rest of Scotland. In spite of the invasion of its fertile valleys by Ayrshire dairy farmers it has remained the old Free Province, a little anti-Scottish, a good deal anti-Irish excessively anti-English, self-centred, self-satisfied, quarrelsome and *frondeur*, yet in the main politically conservative.

In 1811 the Ayrshire invasion had not yet begun, and

there was nothing to mitigate the determination of the people not to send a single man to fight in a war about which they cared nothing. No regiment in the service bore its name. It was looked upon as the haunt of an evil breed who would smuggle and fight, but against, and not among, the soldiers of the King.

A landing party had been attacked and cut up on the Corse of Slakes. Soldiers had to take and hold the old camp of the Levellers in the Duchrae wood, near the Black Water. Bitter hatred prevailed between the Lord Lieutenant's party, formed to aid the government in obtaining recruits, and the commonalty, which was equally determined that no one of theirs should be carried off to endure the shame of the cat-o'-nine-tails.

Earl Raincy made a tour of his estates, and the farmers promised wonderful things, but carefully and immediately sent their lads to the heather and the hill-caves for change of air. The girls took to the plough and threshed the grain on the beaten earth of the barn floor—emerging tired, but bright-eyed and happy. This, at least, they could do to keep Alec or John from the dread triangle and the lacerating whip. The Frenchman's bullet they were willing to risk, but not these. Galloway furnished its full tale of officers to both services, but as a recruiting-ground, even in milder times, it has given poor results.

In 1812 there was a good deal of writing about patriotism in struggling local journals. The big farmers were often loud-voiced, and the publicans hung out colours when the recruiting-officers made temporary headquarters of their houses, but the mass of the people stood silent, sullen and determined. They would not be taken, and if any were seized they would put up such a fight that the "press" would pay three or four lives for one. The chiefs would stay their hand, they argued, if they had to pay the price of three or four formed and disciplined men for a single unwilling recruit who would certainly desert at the first opportunity.

In the old outlaws' cave on Isle Ryan, towards the Mull

out beyond Orraland, thirty or forty young men were gathered. They were not afraid of any attack by land or water. The stony bulk of the isle did not even fear cannon, and the passage, open only at low water, was exceedingly easily defended. Provisions they had in plenty, and for more they had only to cross to the mainland, where every farmer would willingly supply them.

Lads from all Galloway were there, shock-headed Vikings, with far-looking blue eyes, from Kirkmaiden to Leswalt, black, hook-nosed Blairs and McCallums from Garlieston sat beside Rerrick and Colvend men with deep-set eyes, the fine flower of the Free Trade, men whose forefathers had run cargoes for a hundred and thirty years into the same ports, and refused King's service for many thousand, though perfectly obedient to their own lords and war committees. There were always a plenty of fighting men along Solway shore, as the published rolls of 1638 attest.[1] Willing were they to fight, only they would fight when and against whom they choose, under such and such officers, appointed by themselves, and under no others. Kings, whether Highland Stuarts or German Guelphs, they would not obey—no, not though military parties made examples of them at every dyke back. The iron of the Killing Time was branded deep into the folk of Galloway. They would not go soldiering, and they would smuggle. In the last resort, if matters got too hot, the young men would silently betake themselves to Canada, where they rose to be factors and chief traders under the Hudson Bay Company, or, like Paul Jones, took service under another flag, and fought with the lust of battle ever in their heart, against all that was English or smelt of the service of King George.

"Are we to stay here for ever?" demanded Stair Garland, lying on the sand of the upper cavern and looking out at the blue curtain of sky, which was all he could see. Outside was a kind of balcony on which they stretched their legs at night, but, as there were preventive officers on the

[1] *The Galloway War Committee of 1638* (Nicholson, Kirkcudbright).

cliffs with telescopes under their arms, it was forbidden to go out there in daylight.

"We must stay here till the ships of war have gone out of the channel. You can see the top-sails of the *Britomart* at this moment, hanging about the Mull, and a sloop-of-war lies off Logan House, waiting for Captain Laurence's orders."

It was a Stewartry man who spoke, keen of eye and crisply black-haired, his voice soft and easy, not hectoring and overbearing like that of most of his fellows—his name, Godfrey McCulloch, the younger son of a younger son, but of the best and oldest blood in Scotland, which is to say of the Ardwalls.

Godfrey and Stair were in a manner rivals for leadership. The Stewartry man was the elder by many years, and among his own enjoyed an unrivalled reputation, but three-fourths of the Isle Ryan refugees were Wigtonshire men and faithful to Stair Garland.

But Stair Garland was often reckless and headstrong, so brave himself that he hardly though of danger to those whom he led. Godfrey McCulloch, on the other hand, was cautious and long-sighted. He argued out every possibility, and arranged what was to be done if things fell out so and so. Sometimes he even hesitated too long, balancing between two wise courses, while Stair, leading his men with a rush, would thresh his way through to victory. On the whole, Godfrey was the safer, Stair far the more popular leader.

"We cannot lie up in this hole much longer," said Stair, digging his heels into the sand.

"I do not see that you do much lying up," retorted Godfrey McCulloch, his eyes dark and beady in the semi-dark; "you are off ashore more than half the time——"

"After that little slip of a Ferris girl, Patsy," said an Irishman from Antrim. "I saw the pair of you go down the glen together, and may I never see Cushendal more if you had not your arm about her waist behind the dyke——"

Stair's clenched fist shut in the remainder of the sentence.

The Rathlain man choked as he swallowed a couple of teeth, and felt his raw lip acrid upon the gap.

"Tell them you lie—tell them before you spit—or I will send the rest of your teeth after those two!"

The man gasped out that "Sure it was only a joke——"

"A joke, was it?" said Stair fiercely; "then I hope you will consider the teeth you have swallowed as the cream of it!"

The men were silent—not from fear at all, but because any two of them had a right to settle such differences in their own way.

"Will the Irishman not sell us because of Stair Garland's fist closing his mouth so awkward like?" inquired a second Rerrick man, lying at the shoulder of Godfrey McCulloch.

"Not by a great deal," said Godfrey, "perhaps he will kill Stair if he can, though Stair is more likely to kill him. But he will not lay information as to the lads of the Free Trade. He will remember what happened to Luke Finney and James Tynan when they thought to lift the hundred pound reward out for Captain Maxwell of the Scaur."

"What was that?" said the youth at his elbow.

"Have you not heard? It is a Colvend story, too," said McCulloch. "We took them out into mid-channel and tied each man to an old anchor with his fifty pounds in jingling gold about his neck. For which cause Luke Finney and James Tynan, two rusty anchors and a hundred guineas of unrusted gold lie in the gut of the North Channel to this day."

"Is the water deep?" the young man asked.

"Deeper than any diver will reach till the judgment day," quoth Godfrey. "This Rathlin man will think twice before he plays Judas to the lads of the Trade."

"It must have been worst when they were over the side before the anchors went plunk!" The young fellow shuddered. A clean death in a fair fight he did not mind more than another, but dangling there tied to an anchor—"*Ugh!*" said the lad.

That night a cargo was to be run into the Abbey Burnfoot

Bay, close by the house of Julian Wemyss. The King's ships had settled themselves, one in Belfast Lough, and the sloop-of-war well round the point into Loch Ryan. The *Good Intent* might therefore discharge her cargo in peace, and the boats were ready on the beach of the Water Cave to put the Inch Ryan refugees in charge of the pack horses which were to carry the stuff inland, distributing as they went.

The lads were riotous to be off, and Stair had to exercise his authority, backed by Godfrey McCulloch's experience and influence over the eastern men, to keep them quiet in the cove till the time should come for the *Good Intent* to cast anchor in the bay.

The chastisement of the Rathlin man had cowed the wildest spirits and, still more than the fear of Stair, the acquiescence of the company in the justice of the punishment. Nevertheless, those in the cave were restless and uneasy, setting their heads out to sniff the salt of the sea beneath, and craning their necks through the spy-hole to watch the sand-pipers wheeling as if dancing new-fangled waltzes, or probing the sands after little shell-fish and sea worms, never getting in each other's way, but each working quietly along, like a minister in his own parish.

Stair Garland was lost in admiration of the glory of the sea and sand at sunset. The crying of the island curlews coming down each in long plane flight eased his mind. *Willy-wha—willy-wha!* they called in long diminuendo, before they settled.

Presently the mist began to rise out of the hollows and hung out over the sea from Inch Ryan to the mainland crags like the stretched awning of a tent. Stair gave the lads leave to go on the balcony while he himself started on a tour of inspection. He would have liked to take Godfrey McCulloch with him. But he knew that his own following would be jealous and resent his passing them over, so he contented himself with saying, "Attend to what Godfrey says, boys. He has seen more than all of us put together. Fergus" (this to his elder brother) "knock the heads of

any men who make a noise. No one shall come with us to-night who does not obey now!"

Stair went out by the little passage, spoken of in other chronicles, which opened into the inner towers of the ancient castle of the Herons. He found himself among rugged, heathy ground, the hollow palm of the island, now suffused with milky opalescence, for the sun was setting. Hardly could Stair see from one tuft to another, but out of the tinted mist swooped first two and then three birds like angels appearing out of a white heaven. Magnified by the mist Stair hardly recognized the green and black summer uniform of the golden plover, but he heard their softly wistful cries everywhere.

And as the mist shifted and flowed everywhere more and more were revealed, doing sentry duty each on his tussock of bent-grass, while behind his mate effaced herself upon her four eggs or led her little flock into the deepest of the growing heather and among the white meadows of cotton-grass which blew about them, more downy than even the youngest nestling.

Stair made his way to the most easterly point of the isle—that nearest to the Burnfoot Bay. Already the fog was bunching and billowing uneasily. He noted that it was losing its steady, even pour over the island. "It will lift," he muttered.

And from far away there came the sound of a schooner's mainsail being brought down as her head came to the wind, the plunge of an anchor, and then, through a gap in the gloom, the tall, bare mast of a ship in the direction of the new house of Abbey Burnfoot.

"The *Good Intent!*" he muttered; "She must be very sure of herself to come to anchor like that. Still that is Captain Penman's business. If he can discharge his cargo, I can put it out of harm's way. We shall have two hundred lads on the beach by midnight, and whatever force they may bring against us, we can go through them with the strong hand!"

CHAPTER V

PATSY'S CONFESSIONS

PATSY had said nothing at home about her race over the moors to save the Glenanmays lads from the press-gang, and when her Uncle Julian, having talked to Captain Laurence, approached her on the subject, my lady replied that she was at the Bothy of Blairmore to help her friend Jean Garland.

" And where was Jean when the ' press ' found you there alone ? " said Julian Wemyss, smiling.

" She was outside, keeping watch for her brothers," said Patsy, looking at him with bright, clear eyes that could not be other than truthful.

But Uncle Julian had had much experience, and he only smiled more knowingly than ever.

" And the famous costume which so witched the men of war ? " he asked.

" Oh, that," said Patsy, " I had to run, and you can't run fast in a frieze coat with many capes ! "

" No." Uncle Julian nodded his head; " sandals cross-gartered, a bathing dress and a sash ! I would that I had been one of His Majesty's officers to see you."

" I shall dress up for you some time," affirmed Patsy soothingly, " if you will give me the yellow sandals for my very own."

" Ah," said Uncle Julian, " of that I am not sure. They recall something which makes them precious to me."

The girl clasped her hands delightedly.

" Oh, a story at last," she cried, nestling against him. " I shall not tell a soul. You shall see how I can keep a secret."

"But I shall see still better if I do not tell it you!"

"Oh, how abominable of you, Uncle Julian! And I thought you loved me."

"The yellow sandals remind me of a time when I was young—young as you, and a great deal more foolish!"

"But they are a girl's sandals, Uncle Julian—you said so yourself when you lent them to me."

"Indeed, both of them would hardly cover a man's foot!"

"Who was she? Oh, where did you meet her? Did you love her very much?"

"I met her on a little coasting boat belonging to her father, on which I had taken passage from Chios to Smyrna. She knew no English. I knew only one sentence of modern Greek, and I was not sure of the meaning even of that. So I had to be careful. I had it from a poem which was making a noise at the time."

"Oh, *I* know," cried Patsy, "Louis is always saying it over to me: *Zoë mou, sas agapo!* "What does it mean?"

"That I did not know at the time, but I know what I meant the words to mean."

"Was she *very* lovely?"

"Very," said Uncle Julian. "I see you want a description, but I can only indicate. She had great dark eyes into which every sort of languid delight seemed to have been melted and concentrated, and eyelashes like the fringed awnings of a tent. When she lowered them they swept the ground, and when she lifted them it was slowly, as if their very weight fought against her will!"

"Oh-o-o-h!" said Patsy, feeling with her fingers, "I have regular scrubs. You won't ever love me when you think of her, Uncle Julian."

"I might," he answered, "if you had only the yellow sandals——"

"No, no, tell me about her! What did you say to her?"

"I said '*Zoë mou*' half a dozen times, sitting closer to her every time. I spoke lower and lower, till the last '*Zoë mou*' was whispered into her ear.

"Then I risked the other part, '*sas agapo*'—and expected a box on the ear, or perhaps an appeal to her father, but instead she turned and kissed me!"

"Hurrah, Uncle Julian, I'm sure so should I—if any one had the sense to talk to me like that, low and in my ear (that tickles any way) and in an unknown tongue."

"But you see the point was that the tongue was not unknown to her. She was a Greek girl and——"

"But what, after all, *did* it mean? She told you afterwards, of course."

"Well," said Uncle Julian, meditating, "Not exactly. I found out. I had said, '*Zoë* mine, I love you!'"

"But what does '*Zoë*' mean?"

"My life!"

"Life of mine, I love you!" Patsy repeated, trying various tones. "Uncle Julian, you must have made love like an archangel. Without knowing it, you had said about all that there was to say, and changing your voice like that—oh, I do wish I had been that girl. I don't wonder you don't want to give me the yellow sandals. I should not even have lent them for five minutes. You must not. I shall bring them back to you. It would be a sacrilege!"

"No," said Uncle Julian, "you are the brightest thing in my world, the likest the Greek girl and all the young things I once loved. It is your turn now, you small, black-headed Pictish woman!"

"I am not 'small.' I am taller than you, Uncle Julian!"

"I daresay, but you are slim as a willow branch. I could take you up between my finger and thumb."

"If you could catch me, Uncle Julian; but, see—you could not!"

With a swift spring she threw herself out of the low French window and stood on the lawn, ready poised for flight.

A brightness came into her uncle's eyes.

"I have known many and learned much," he thought, "but I have missed the best."

"Come, Uncle," she said, tapping the grass with her

shoe, " I can't run as well as in kilt and sandals, or like the girl who played ball on the sands, but I can beat you—yes, I could run in circles about you ! "

" I know, I know, you swallow ! " proclaimed an admiring uncle. " But the day is past when I ran after agreeable young women. Generally they have to pocket their pride and come to see me—you do every day, you know ! "

" Yes," said Patsy, " but do not think it is to see you, even if you are my mother's brother——"

" Half-brother——"

" My mother's brother, I say," persisted Patsy. " It is because you teach me to speak French and to read Latin books, and the mathematic (though that I love not so well), and also chiefly because you lend me many books to read up in dull old Cairn Ferris."

" Do not blaspheme the habitation of your fathers," said Julian Wemyss. " Here is a house all ready for you when you marry. If it were not for the table of affinities in the beginning of the Bible, and if I were twenty years younger, I should ask you myself ! "

" Oh," said Patsy, " that would be splendid. You are far the nicest man and the most interesting I ever talked to. Don't ask me, for I should say ' yes ' in a minute."

. . . . . .

Usually Patsy Ferris and her father had not much to say to one another.

" Good morning, daughter ! " quoth Adam, coming in from his early inspection ; " whither away with such skip-jack grace, habited in yellow and black like a wasp ? "

" I have done my work, father," Patsy would answer. " I promised to go help Jean at Glenanmays. The lads are all in the heather and the maids have to do the heavy work of the field."

" But not you—I cannot have you handling the hoe and rake like a field worker ! "

" No, no, father; Jean is always indoors or at the dairy."

Adam Ferris looked thoughtful and his dark brows drew

together. He detested the press-gang and all it meant to the young men of the parish.

"I could send over a man or two, but my grieve or I myself would require to accompany them for protection against seizure."

"No need," said his daughter hastily. "Diarmid would not wish to draw you into his sons' quarrels and, I think, Stair's band ran a big cargo last night from the Burnfoot Bay. There were twenty preventive men there, they say. Yet they stood aside and let the pack horses go by like men in a dream!"

Adam grew a little paler. He did not like this open defiance of the forces of law and order.

"How was that?" he demanded, "where was the military?"

"There were two hundred lads, all masked and all armed. a hundred pack horses and another hundred to ride upon, What could twenty customs men do with the like of these? Stair Garland left enough good lads to herd them close under the cliff till the *Good Intent* had her anchor up and the caravan was out of all reach of danger."

This was by far the most serious news Adam Ferris had received for a long time, but there was worse still to come.

"Uncle Julian says I ought to tell you, father," Patsy began with quite unusual gravity, "that when the press-gang went to the Bothy of Blairmore to take the lads of Glenanmays, they found me. I could run much faster than Jean, so I got there first."

Her father grew grey under the olive of his skin. "The men were not insolent?" he asked, for he knew the manners and customs of his Majesty's press in lonely shielings.

"I only saw the officers—Captain Laurence and a naval lieutenant—besides that smooth rascal McClure from Stoney Kirk!"

Even then Patsy hardly dared tell her father how unconventionally she had been clad, but she plucked up heart and went through with it.

"I ran from the Maidens' Cove at the foot of the Mays

glen along the sands, and through the heather. I had Uncle Julian's yellow sandals on my feet, and I got there in time for the lads to scatter, though I had started after the boat had passed out of sight round the Black Point."

"They knew who you were?" her father asked.

"Certainly, I told them," said Patsy eagerly. "I said also that they had no right on my father's land. We had no sailors or fisherfolk on Cairn Ferris."

"Right enough," said her father, "but I hope you were not hasty with the men. Laurence is an honest enough fellow, doing an unpleasant duty, and the others—well, they are apt to find ways of revenging themselves."

"Oh," said Patsy, suddenly radiant, poising her small black head, "I think they rather liked talking to me. I had Jean's dress kilted below the knee. It was blue, and went well with the yellow cross leathers of the sandals. I had a broad sash about my waist, too."

"What difference did that make?" her father asked.

"Oh, none to you, father," Patsy answered saucily, "but to them it seemed to make quite a lot of difference."

Adam Ferris shook his head in reproof.

"You grow reckless, Patsy," he said, "either I must send you away where you will have ladies of your own position to look after you, or we must marry you out of hand and let your husband be responsible for you!"

"If you want me to run away, dad, just keep on talking to me like that. I won't have any old 'camel' women to rule over me. I am not going to leave home, but when I want to get married I shall make my own arrangements and then—tell you afterwards."

"Surely you will ask my permission?"

"The same sort of permission you asked when you ran away with my mother from the door of the Edinburgh Assembly rooms!"

Adam Ferris smiled grimly.

"What is allowable for a man does not always become a woman," he said.

"But what holds for one Ferris becomes another," his daughter retorted.

"Jeddart justice," said her father, still smiling; "then you will marry first, and ask permission afterwards."

"Exactly," said Patsy cheerfully. "I knew I could make you understand."

CHAPTER VI

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

In spite of her black, close-clustering hair Patsy had the dark blue eyes of her Uncle Julian. Young men and older ones also (who ought to have known better) were in the habit of calling them violet when they walked with Patsy in the twilight, when many unforeseen things happen.

Then Patsy knew exactly what to think. For her Uncle Julian had told her that when a man is in love he becomes colour blind. When asked how he knew, Julian said that once on a time he had friends who used to confide their love affairs to him. But he smiled as he said it—the believe-as-much-of-that-as-you-like smile which was Patsy's own, and was her heritage from a less grave race than the Ferrises of Cairn Ferris.

Julian had the same smile when he condemned the Free Trade as an interference with the financial policy of King George, and at the same time drew a jug from a jar of "special" Hollands, or from such an anker of cognac as could not be found elsewhere in Scotland. He had found both, as it were dropped from heaven, in a corner of his stable, but Tam Eident, whom he had carefully catechized, knew nothing about the matter. He had, he averred, been asleep at the time in his bed in the stable-loft.

Doubtless the Free Traders thought they were paying for some complaisance on the part of the master of Abbey Burnfoot. But his light burned steadily up in his study window. He had never looked down on the flitting torches, the turmoil of the loading, the black figures crossing and recrossing the glimmering strips of sand, the clinking of shod feet on the banks of pebble, the jingling of the chains

of the pack saddles. He had been wisely deaf and had carried his lamp upstairs to the little turret chamber, where he choose to sleep on wild nights, that he might the better hear the wind swirl about him, the wind thresh and the sea roar and churn on the beaches and snore in the spouting-crags of the Burnfoot.

So on nights when strange noises came from without, and the wild birds keckled with a sound that might be mistaken for the neighing of horses, Julian Wemyss betook himself to his strong tower, and, locking the door at the top of the stone staircase, went peacefully to sleep, till the morrow showed up wide wet sands, whipped by the wind, many tracks of horses among the dunes, and, dipping far down the channel towards St. Bees, the top-sails of a schooner, which might be the much-sought-for *Good Intent* or, again, might not.

Julian Wemyss was not so old as you might expect from a man so learned and so apart from the world. Various reasons had been given for his retirement to this lonely spot when, during the truce, an appointment as ambassador extraordinary to Paris was within his grasp. He had acquitted himself highly on several "missions" already, and there was no doubt that Vienna was only a step to a permanency in Paris, so soon as the war should cease. But suddenly Julian Wemyss resigned all his appointments into the King's hands, and it was whispered that he had done so on account of a lady so highly placed that even to name her was something like high treason. This was already years ago and even the memory of it had grown dim.

Now, Julian Wemyss might be somewhere near fifty years of age, but did not look a day more than forty, and with certain lights on his face and that kindly smile of his, wise and tolerant, he looked younger still.

He was erect and slender, not very tall beside Adam, his brother-in-law, but moving with a light, easy carriage something between that of an athlete and a favourite of drawing-rooms.

He had the noticeable dark blue eyes that twinkled

merrily, yet with something gloomy in their darkness, as of hyacinths in a woodland glade, drifting and smoky, like the kind of smoke that comes from weed-burning or a peat-fire lit on a still day.

His niece, who had heard from Jean Garland some of the talk of the country, for long dared not ask her uncle point-blank if it were true about the princess, but she showed such continual curiosity about his love affairs, that he would keep her waiting while he made an entry in his diary, or other book of written notes, and then declare solemnly that the only girl he had ever loved was named Patsy, and was a thankless brat, unworthy of the care and affection of the best of uncles.

"Nonsense," his niece would cry, happy, however, all the same to have him say so.

"A girl named Patsy," he would continue, "who was put into my arms an hour old to take what care I could of, her father being ill-suited for the task! I am the only relative she has on her mother's side, and Adam Ferris is equally solitary on the other. So we must take good care of the minx, Adam and I. She is all we have, little as she deserves that we should waste a thought on her—though she threatens to run away with the first gipsy that comes to the yett, as did the Countess of Cassillis in the ballad."

"My father has been telling tales—Oh, shame of him!" cried Patsy, reddening. "I said that I would run away with you, if you were not my uncle, but then I did not know about——"

She stopped suddenly. Her tongue had betrayed her.

"About what? Out with it," said Julian.

"About the princess!" Patsy answered, her eyes in his.

"Who has been listening to gossip now?" said Julian Wemyss.

"I—I," cried Patsy, "and I would give all I have to know what is true and what is clatter of the country."

"There is little to hide," said Julian quietly, looking past his niece out of the windows giving on the sea; "but

that little is not my own to tell. If some day I am at liberty to speak, I promise that little Patsy Ferris shall be the first to hear."

Then he patted her head reproachfully, "Little Curiosity," he said with tenderness, "it is not good for girls to be told everything. Old fellows like me ought to know, so as to keep their wards out of mischief. The world is a strange and dangerous place, full of traps and quicksands, and for this reason see that you always come to me with your troubles. Do not bother Adam Ferris with them. He has never ventured beyond the Plainstones of Dumfries on a cattle-fair day. Besides many women have told me their sorrows."

"Yes," promised Patsy. "I don't know about princesses, but I do know that many girls must have loved you, Uncle Julian, for that is the reason you are so sweet to me now!"

. . . . . .

Julian's chief ally in the county was Miss Aline Minto of Balmacminto, who lived at Ladykirk. She was wealthy, but had been so shy of men that she had escaped numberless wooers, sorely enamoured of the Balmacminto estates, and now at the age of forty-five showed the prettiest fringes of white curls in the world, a complexion of seventeen, and something so trustful and rare in the way of brown eyes that Raeburn, at the height of his fame, had painted her for the mere love of winsomeness in growing old.

She knew Julian's reputation and at first had kept out of his way. But when once she met him, the two had become comrades on the spot. Miss Aline saw that this man had no designs either upon her or upon the estates. A kindly aloofness from all such mean projects, an ease and grace that spoke of worlds quite unrealized by Miss Aline, somehow urged her to confide in him. In a month he had become indispensable. Miss Aline asked his advice and called upon Julian Wemyss for aid in all circumstances.

He found her a new factor, carrying on the duties till the new young man (from his own solicitor's office) was

installed. He waited with Miss Aline the portentous visit of Sir Bunny Bunny, Bart., of Crawhall. He came to demand the honour of her hand for his clod-hopping son, George Bunny Bunny, who hitherto had only distinguished himself by shooting a keeper in the leg, by frightening village children gathering violets and daisies, and by going to the wars with a troop of horse raised in the neighbourhood, only to be sent back again for incompetence. He had, since then, been the chief support of the press-gang in the neighbourhood, and, if he had not been so much despised, might have been hated. But he had enough sense to restrain from active interference with the Free Traders, for, owing to a personal dislike for violence in any form which might endanger his skin, he kept clear of press-gang scrimmages, confining himself to assisting Superintendent McClure with such information as the Easterhall coast-line afforded.

The baronet himself was a keen-eyed, long-nosed old gentleman, with many times the spirit of his son. He had been accustomed all his life to getting his own way, except with his wife. Even at Castle Raincy he had known how to cow the gentle mother of Louis Raincy, though something dangerous in the boy's eye had led him to let Louis alone.

"The spark of mad Raincy blood is in the whelp," he confided to his friends; "the same his grandfather has. They can look positively murderous sometimes."

Sir Bunny was taken aback to find Julian waiting for him in Miss Aline's white and gold drawing-room at Ladykirk.

"Am I, then, to congratulate you?" he said to Julian Wemyss, with false good nature.

"You are," said Julian calmly, "upon the friendship and trust of the best woman in the world. Anything else I should consider impertinence and know how to resent as such!"

"I desire to see Miss Aline," said Sir Bunny, to cut short a conversation which might easily become unpleasant.

"Certainly," said Julian carelessly, as if he were saying the lightest of nothings; "but I think you will find that I could have answered you quite as well."

"How so?" said the baronet, glowering at him, his fingers twitching to take this courtly, easy-spoken man by the throat.

"Because you come to propose your son, Mr. George, for the honour of the hand of Miss Aline Minto. Miss Aline can say 'No' for herself. But I think you had better not trouble her and content yourself with the indication I give you."

"And what is that?"

"That Miss Aline prefers to remain as she is!"

The baronet, however, insisted on a personal answer. Miss Aline came in and stood shyly while Sir Bunny pointed out the advantages of his proposal—the estates joined, the parish under control, and the family name changed by poll deed to Minto-Bunny-Bunny."

"I am obliged for your thinking of me," said Miss Aline sweetly, "but for the present I have no intention of marrying."

"I warn you," said Sir Bunny Bunny, "that by continuing to act as you are doing, you are exposing yourself to misconstruction——"

Julian Wemyss, who had been looking out of the window, turned suddenly and caught his eye.

Old Sir Bunny was no coward, but he shrank from the look of Julian Wemyss as if it had been a knife at his breast.

"I mean," he said, "that Miss Aline, gracious and youthful as she is, ought to remember that youth does not last for ever!"

He thought he had turned the matter off rather neatly, and was surprised when Julian merely shrugged his shoulders and turned again to the window. Presently Sir Bunny Bunny made his bow and departed, cursing the interference of Julian Wemyss in what had long been the desire of his heart, the union of the Bunny Bunny properties with those

of Balmacminto. He had thought about it so long that it had become to his mind an accomplished fact. Indeed, he had only been waiting for his loutish son George to finish his wild-oat sowing before communicating the news of her good fortune to Miss Aline.

He was still more astonished on the way home from Ladykirk. An officer, riding, checked at his approach, and, with a sketched salute, reined his steed long enough to ask, "Do you know where Mr. Julian Wemyss is to be found? He is to go home immediately. His Royal Highness the Duke is at Abbey Burnfoot!"

"What duke?" the baronet fairly gasped.

"The Duke of Lyonesse, of course, on his way from Ireland," said the officer, "he was junior *attaché* to Mr. Wemyss at Vienna!"

"Good God!" said the baronet, "I wonder if Wemyss will bring him to Bunny House."

And he offered to ride with the officer to where Julian might be found. The adjutant took one look at the plethoric proportions of the baronet's mount, and answered that he was in a hurry. A simple indication would be enough for him. Whereupon, with some reluctance, Sir Bunny pointed to the chimneys of Ladykirk quietly reeking through the trees, and with a hasty lift of his reins the officer rode on, leaving the baronet staring after him, wondering whether he ought to tell his wife, or if he should leave her to find out for herself.

His brain wheeled. For Julian Wemyss, whom none of them, except Miss Aline, had chosen to know, was receiving at his house, hitherto the eyesore and scandal of the neighbourhood, a Prince of the blood Royal. After all, there must have been something in that talk of great ladies heartbroken because of this Julian Wemyss, in whom the county saw nothing, and in whose ambassadorship they had refused to believe, even though his resignation of it so unexpectedly had been commented upon in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, which was taken in by Sir Bunny and passed round afterwards from house to house.

What could so great a man find to do there? In a distant and disdainful fashion Sir Bunny knew Abbey Burnfoot. It was not even a mansion—merely a new-fangled sort of cottage at the best—built in Italian fashion, they said, but after all, only two score yards of garden, with a narrow rim of links overgrown with sea pink and ground holly. It was stuck ridiculously in between the white sands and the pour of the Abbey Burn—no drives or pleasances, no cropped hedges and trim parterres—nothing, in short, which Royalty had a right to expect when visiting a real gentleman's country seat, such as he flattered himself could be found at Bunny House in the shire of Wigton.

It did not occur to Sir Bunny Bunny, with his poor little squireen's point of view, that His Royal Highness might possibly come to see, not long avenues and close-cropped hedges, but his old kind chief of Constantinople and Vienna.

So he was forced to content himself with many shakings of his head, and muttering that the country was going to the dogs when princes consorted with beggars or little better, as he rode off home to Bunny House in desperate fear of what his wife Lady Bunny would say when he got there.

CHAPTER VII

THE LADS IN THE HEATHER

PATSY came into her uncle Julian's drawing-room in her most tempestuous manner. She had been for a gallop along the sands on Stair Garland's pony and had beaten Louis de Raincy's Honeypot by a length. She was in high feather, and as she tramped along the cool parqueted hall she kept calling out, "Uncle Ju—where are you, Uncle Ju?"

When she opened the door and dashed in she disturbed the conference of three men by the window, one of whom was in uniform, and the other two dressed in the latest fashion, of which Patsy had as yet only seen prints at the end of her uncle's *Town and Country Magazine*—a review which, curiously enough, always lacked some of its pages by the time Patsy was allowed to see it.

"Oh," said Patsy, no ways abashed, "you have come to see my uncle—will you be seated?"

Patsy noticed that the tallest of the young men made a slight sign to his companions, and that they sat down as if in answer to that signal instead of accepting her invitation at once.

"We have indeed come a long distance in order to call on Mr. Julian Wemyss," said the young man of the signal, "I knew him at Vienna, and as I was passing through from Ireland, I took this opportunity of paying my respects to him. But it is better still to find such a charming young lady installed in his house to do the honours!"

"Oh," said Patsy, "I do not live here, but with my father at the other end of the glen. I only come every day to cheer him up—Uncle Ju is so apt to get the 'pokes'!"

" The ' pokes '—what are they ? " exclaimed the tall and ruddy young man, who continued to stare at her in a manner which would have discountenanced any other than Patsy.

" The ' pokes ' are what you get if you are left too long alone with all these shelves, especially if you stop indoors to read them. Then I come and take Uncle Julian out, and he feels better before I have gone a mile with him ! "

" So you are a remedy for the ' pokes,' " said the young man, drawing his chair nearer to that of Patsy, as if to show his interest. " I often have the disease, though with me it does not come from reading too many books. But I should gladly take the malady that I might taste of the antidote ! "

And Patsy felt her face flush with the intensity of his regard. She cast down her eyes, and the young man took advantage of the fact to signal slightly to his friends. One after the other they rose and, with an excuse, left the room.

The tall young man came gradually closer to Patsy till she started to her feet, merely to break the nervous tension. An instinctive repulsion sent her to the window, and, then, though he followed her, she somehow felt safe. There were the familiar sands, and in a moment she could be outside where none could touch her. After all, she thought, as she looked at the white line of the breakers and heard the familiar clatter of the servants in the kitchen below, she was a fool to be so idiotically nervous, like a fine smelling-salts lady. What could happen to her ? What if she did not like this very forward young man ? He was a guest of her Uncle Julian's—he might even be his friend. Very likely he meant no harm, and she would treat him just like anybody else. Yes, that would be best.

" Ah," said the young man, leaning over her as she stood looking out, " if only I had been at that cottage on the hills with the officers the other day ! I would have given a thousand guineas for their luck. But now that I am fortunate enough to have you to myself for a moment,

let me say how much I admire you, Miss Patsy—that is your name, I think ? "

Patsy did not answer. She had one hand on the sill and was wondering if the young man were mad or only drunk—also how long it would take for her to be safe among the heather.

" You are far too fine and beautiful," he continued, " too bewitching and original to remain here. You must come to London and take your place among our reigning beauties. Ah, if only you would trust to one who adores you, one who would do anything in the world for you——"

" If you mean yourself, will you help me to wind wool ? " said Patsy. " I have a pair of heather-mixture stockings to make for uncle. I promised to make them for him last Christmas and I only began them yesterday."

" Certainly," said the young man, visibly discountenanced, " but can your uncle not wait a little longer ? I wish to talk to you. It was solely for that purpose I came here, believe me. I had heard of you from Captain Laurence and young Everard, one of the officers of the *Britomart*, in which I came from Ireland. I was over there governing the island for my father ! "

" Ah, were you ? " said Patsy, " well, here is the wool. Can you wind it ? No ! Then you had better hold it. That, at least, you can do.—Well, there you are, remember I shall find you out if you are boasting."

" But I have got much to say to you ! " the young man objected.

" I can listen better on my feet. I must be doing something. There—sit down on that three-legged ' creepie,' and, whatever you do, do not tangle the wool."

Patsy was resolved that, whatever she might do in the future, she would now take the matter lightly, and not insult her uncle's guest in the drawing-room of Abbey Burnfoot.

. . . . . .

When Julian Wemyss returned in haste from Miss Aline's, he found no less a person than H.R.H. the Duke of Lyonesse

seated on a stool holding wool for Patsy, who wound a ball with rapid, nimble fingers while she scolded a delighted Great Personage for his mismanagement. Two gentlemen, of whom one was Captain Laurence, stood outside and waited gravely, as indeed became them. But the Duke of Lyonesse was in the highest spirits and really gave himself to his task, knitting his brows and striving to follow Patsy's instructions to the letter.

" It is a long time since I heard so much truth about myself," said the Duke. " I own I am both stupid and awkward, but then, by Gad, I am willing to learn ! "

" People who are stupid and awkward ought not to offer," said Patsy. " I am sure that Captain Laurence, whom you sent away, could do it a great deal better."

" I can't give up the honour even to my friend Laurence," said the Prince. " In for a penny, in for a pound. I must conquer this art or be for ever disgraced in this lady's eyes, and, therefore, in my own ! "

" You should practise before boasting of what you can do," said Patsy. " Make Captain Laurence wind for you an hour each morning, and in a little while you will be able to knit your own stockings."

" By Gad," said his Highness, " that is a good idea. Will you teach me ? Often when I was at Constantinople and also at sea I wished I had something to help the time to pass besides stupid books ! "

He glanced about him at the crowded shelves. " Though I know your uncle does not think them stupid," he added, with some sense of an apology due ; " but then we cannot all be so clever as he ! "

" I should think not, indeed," said Patsy sharply, " nor half so handsome ! "

The two gentlemen at the door glanced at one another, but the Duke of Lyonesse did not wince. He went on carefully slanting his hands time about to let the wool slip round, bending his thumbs to act as a drag and obeying his task-mistress to the best of his ability.

" That has always been the opinion of your sex all the

world over," he said gravely, "if Julian Wemyss entered for a race, what was left for the others but the Consolation Stakes? But you, at least, are a stake for which he cannot enter!"

A quick, light footstep passed through the hall and the door opened.

"Ah, Wemyss," cried the Duke, "don't interrupt, like a good fellow. I am on my promotion. Your niece has been dressing me down. I hope to do better after a while. Besides, we have just been saying how perfectly irresistible you are, and how the ladies love you. You ought to be grateful for that at any rate."

The last threads ran swiftly over the opened fingers, and Patsy deftly slid the end into the ball, said "Thank you," and, with a curtsey, went out by the way of the French window leading to the garden, leaving the men to themselves.

"Jove," said the Duke, looking after her through the window, "where and how did you find such a treasure? No wonder you gave up Paris for this. Like Henry of Navarre, I should give up both Paris and France for such a mass—an real exile's consolation, good faith. Wemyss, you used to make me read about Ovid starving for years in the Danube swamps, but this would be consolation for an exile if he had to roof in the pole to make himself a house."

"I am sorry," said Julian, somewhat formally, "that I was not in time to introduce you to my only sister's only daughter, my niece and heiress, Miss Patricia Wemyss Ferris of Cairn Ferris."

"I beg your pardon," said his Highness, "Captain Laurence made us laugh so much at a tale he was telling, that I fear the introductions were a little slipshod. I shall make my apologies to the young lady when I have the opportunity of bettering the acquaintance."

Julian Wemyss knew very well what was the story which Laurence had been retailing—that of the disappointed man-hunters at the bothy in the Wild of Blairmore. But he said nothing, and proceeded to make his young friend at

home in his house of Abbey Burnfoot. He made no apologies. There was need of none. At Varna and in the little towns along the Illyrian coast his pupil and he had often had to share far humbler accommodation.

For though Julian Wemyss lived apart from the world, he kept a small yacht to keep him in comfortable touch with the outside markets. The passage to Glasgow was an easy one. Dumfries and the Cumberland ports were open to him, and so, with the foreign articles which were found in his outer cellars after a trip of the *Good Intent* (master and owner, Captain Penman), no house in the county could produce at short notice so excellent and various a bill of fare.

A place had been set at dinner for Patsy, but it remained empty. Patsy had simply disappeared. No one had seen her about the shore, nor had she been met with along the dusky alders and dimpling birches of the path by the burnside. Neither had it pleased her to reappear at Cairn Ferris, whither Julian had been careful to send an inquiry.

Such conduct, however, did not seriously disquiet anybody, for Patsy's ways were too erratic and the country too safe (so long, at least, as she kept to the Ferris properties) for any one to harbour serious fears about her.

And, indeed, there was no cause. Patsy had no idea of going off her father's lands. She had simply taken a scamper over the Rig of Blairmore, keeping to the deeper cover of the hollows till she came to the nook that sheltered the bothy. Here she glanced within, but all was empty, swept and garnished. There was no sign about the place of any recent occupation.

All was trim and well-kept as she had left it—dust being unknown on the Wild of Blairmore. But in the little hiding-place which ordinarily held the key, a small rock-cupboard beneath a couple of great boulders, fallen thwartwise across one another like drunken men embracing, she found a strip of twisted paper. Patsy thought that it contained a message from Jean, but in a moment she recognized the aggressive penmanship of Stair Garland.

" If you want me, stand five minutes on Peden's Stone ! "

That was all, but Patsy knew that Stair had all the time been watching over her in some wild, sudden-swooping, peregrine falcon-fashion of his own. He had left the warning if she should happen to visit the Bothy while it was being watched for the return of the young men whom the " press " had missed on the day of Patsy's wild race in the yellow sandals.

Now, save that it might pleasure the boy, Patsy had no special reason for wishing to see Stair Garland. But it would certainly be well for her to talk with his sister Jean. She wished to do this without going to the farm itself. Her absence from her uncle's would soon be noticed, and as she had not appeared at her father's house of Cairn Ferris, it was to Glenanmays that any searchers would go first. She was therefore wishful to speak to Jean and ask her opinion of the visitors who had taken possession of her uncle's house at the Burnfoot.

So with circumspection she crossed the pebbly bed of the Mays Water and climbed up into a crater-like amphitheatre from the edge of which a flat block of stone jutted out. It was told in the " persecuting " lore of the parish that the great " Peden the Prophet " had often used it as a pulpit, his congregation being seated round the semicircle and the Mays Water birling and singing handily below in case of children to be baptized.

Patsy stood on the stone, all trodden smooth by the restless feet of the hill lambs which in spring came from the most distant parts of the moor to gambol there. She could look both up and down the water, but for a while she saw nothing of Stair.

But the five minutes were not up, when, from a thick tuft of broom, she heard the call of the whin-chat, like a tiny hammer ringing on hard stone. The sound came from up the water and Patsy moved towards it, stepping deftly from stone to stone in the bed of the stream.

" Stair," she said softly, " where are you, Stair ? " A full swathe of broom moved itself aside, and she could see

Stair Garland lying in a rocky niche which he had prepared long before, in case of such a very probable emergency as the officers of the excise coming after him.

The barrel of his long gun looked over his shoulder.

"Go on, Patsy," he said, "walk on up the burn as if you had seen nothing and I shall be with you in a moment."

She had reached a little knoll, crowned with alder bushes, when she found him entering from the opposite side. Sitting down, she told him of the Duke's coming to Abbey Burnfoot, and of the two gentlemen who were with him, Captain Laurence and Lord Wargrove.

"Ah," said Stair, "so it is for that we have a full squadron of dragoons camped in our barns at Glenanmays, the stable emptied of our own horses to make room for those of the dragoons, and the whole house turned upside down. I thought it was too big a force to be sent after the three of us."

"Fergus and Agnew are still away, then?" queried Patsy, sure that they were.

Stair grinned.

"They are in the heather, like myself," he chuckled, "but neither of them has such a choice of hidie-holes as I have. I can hide better and lie closer, besides keeping a watch on the farm and on you, Miss Patsy, with the soldiers all about within the shot of a gun."

"Can you bring Jean to me, Stair?" said Patsy, "it will be hard, I know, with all those men on the watch at Glenanmays."

Stair flushed a little with the joy of a difficult commission. He whistled shrilly three times, and then sat quite still, listening. Then he whistled thrice more, and the echoes had hardly died away before the wise, towsy head of a rough collie with the big, brown eyes of the genuine Galloway sheep-dog peered out of the bracken and long grass of the burnside. He came silently and expectantly to his master, as if he enjoyed the game as much as any one.

"Here, Whitefoot," said Stair, and the dog came obediently to his side. He wore on his neck a plain leather

collar, which his master undid. In one place the inside leather was doubled but held tight when worn by Whitefoot, owing to the roughness of the dog's mane of hair. Stair pushed back the understrap, and taking a piece of paper from his waistcoat, wrote upon it the figure "2" very large and clear. Then he shook a forefinger before Whitefoot's moist nose, and said with emphasis the single word "Jean."

The dog lifted his forepaws a little clear of the ground, and, as it were, barked without noise, making an eager, half-strangled noise in his throat to show he understood.

"Jean!" Stair repeated.

"A-owch!" whispered the dog, his tail wagging violently and his eyes fairly blazing.

"Go!" said Stair, and the next moment the tall bracken had closed on Whitefoot. Not the tremor of a leaf, not the swaying of a rag-weed told Patsy which way he had gone. In these days the very dogs had been trained to run invisibly and to bark under their breaths. The Traffic and the "press," but especially the latter, had silenced much of the immemorial mirth of the farm-towns. The shadow of the war cloud rested on the ancient Free Province. The lads might 'list, but they would not be "pressed." "A lad gaen to the wars" or "a lassie fa'en wrang" were the utmost shame that could fall upon any Galloway household, and of the two the lassie was more readily forgiven than the lad with the colours.

"I shall wait till Jean comes," said Stair a little shamefacedly, because he understood that the girls would naturally wish to talk of their own affairs. "I must see how the spurred gentry are behaving themselves up at the farm."

But to assure Patsy of his complete disinterestedness, he went to the edge of alder-clump and stood there leaning on his gun. He watched keenly the twisting links of the Mays Water, a silver chain flung carelessly in the sun, cut with gun-metal coloured patches where it sulked a while in shadowy pools. Whitefoot would do his duty. Of that

there was no doubt whatever. He would find Jean. He would attract her attention. Jean would go out to the dairy, whither Whitefoot would follow. There the collar would be opened, the paper taken out, and she would soon be on her way for that one of Stair's trysting-places which bore the number " 2 " on the list he had given her.

Presently out of the tall grass of the lower meadow the head and shoulders of Jean Garland appeared. He could see her wading breast-deep along the rag-weed and the meadow-sweet. The faint wind-furrow which preceded her showed where Whitefoot, still invisible, guided the girl to the exact clump of undergrowth where Patsy and Stair were waiting.

After a little they could see, emerging likewise, the cocked ears, the shaggy head and eager brown eyes of Whitefoot as he turned at every other yard to make sure that Jean was following, and appreciating all his cleverness. At the edge of the clump of dull green alders he drew back to let her pass, as much as to say, " There now—you can do the rest—go on and see for yourself if I have not guided you aright."

Jean came upon her brother first. He was still leaning with one hand on his gun and the opposite elbow crooked about the bole of a tree.

" All right up there ? " he demanded in a low tone, indicating the farm with a jerk of his head.

Jean nodded without speaking. She was sure it was not merely to ask this that he had sent Whitefoot to bring her to him.

" No insolence ? "

" No," said Jean, " they are all as little troublesome as they can help. There is some general or great person over at the Abbey Burn House——"

" A Royal Prince," said Stair bitterly, " go on, Jean. I think it is about him that Patsy wishes to speak to you ! Keep Whitefoot by you, and if you want me he will know where to find me."

Jean disappeared, and in another moment had found her

friend. In the snuggest nook of the shelter afforded by the alder undergrowth the two sat down.

Then Patsy revealed to Jean her invincible fear and dislike of the royal visitor whom she had seen at her uncle's. She had seen something glitter for a moment in his eyes which had frightened her, and though she had played her part out to the end, she had fled the moment after to consult with Jean, a wise maid for her years and the only soul in the world fully in Patsy's confidence.

" Uncle Julian cannot help me this time," she said, " he is the man's friend. He would believe no ill of him. And, indeed, I have nothing really to put before him. Men want evidence, not impressions. If I were to say to my Uncle Julian that I was afraid of the man's eyes, he would only call me a little fool and tell me to look the other way ! "

Patsy found Jean exceedingly comforting. Jean understood without having to have things explained, without asking questions. She shelved the doubt as to whether Patsy was under a misapprehension. Patsy was afraid. Patsy had seen, therefore the thing was so. That is the reason why girls reveal themselves one to the other and why their friendships are often durable. They may quarrel like two little spitfires, and mostly do, but—they respect each others' intuitions.

So that as soon as Jean was in possession of Patsy's fear of an unknown hovering danger, she called out to Stair, " Don't go far away—we may need you ! "

To understand Patsy's feeling it must be remembered that she had been accustomed from her earliest infancy to hear of the wild deeds of the King's sons—how this one had carried off an actress, another made prize of a young lady of fashion—the Regent, the Dukes of York and Cumberland had set the fashion. The younger princes had out-princed their elders, and there was not a gossip in the countryside but could retail their latest enormities with loud outcries of horror, yet with an undercurrent of the curious popular feeling that, after all, it rather became young princes so to misconduct themselves.

If the Duke of Lyonesse had been less talked about than his brothers, it was only because his long residence abroad had blunted the edge of calumny. For in his case the women were French or Austrians, and it seemed quite natural that such things should befall " foreigners."

All this made a background to Patsy's fear of the Prince, but there remained something else as well. Patsy had never been afraid before—and she was not quite sure whether she liked it or not.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLACK PEARL OF CAIRN FERRIS

"NEVER was such a pearl—a black pearl—yes, but worth a thousand of your drowsy blondes. I am damnably obliged to that recruiting fellow—what is his wretched Scotch name—oh, McClure—for signalling such a treasure to a man who can appreciate her. You, Laurence, would have been long enough without opening your mouth. You had, I dare say, some idea of paying court in that quarter on your own account. Well, I am your superior officer and you must stand aside. But if you back me up now, I swear that you shall be gazetted Colonel in a month."

It was thus that the Duke of Lyonesse, in the guest-chamber which Julian Wemyss had prepared for him, announced his intentions as to the niece of his host and sometime chief. The young men of the blood royal in those days considered such things as marks of honour paid by them, and, indeed, the old Arabella Churchill tradition was still so fresh, that they had some excuse for so thinking.

It was, indeed, to see the marvel of the Bothy of Blairmore that the Prince had come so far out of his road. He was on his way back from Ireland where, as usual, he had been sent, somewhat optimistically, to solve the Irish question. As the Prince who could easily most be spared, he had been ordered to show himself in the regions which had been convulsed by the rising of '98. He had escaped without hurt, and was now on his way Londonwards. So he could afford to halt a while to behold a wonder of grace and beauty. The dangers of his Irish campaign deserved at least some recompense.

Besides Everard of the *Britomart* had talked at some length to him. The girl of the yellow sandals whom the "press" had found in the Bothy of Blairmore, was still the talk of the officers' mess when that ship had been sent to Belfast Lough to ferry successful Royalty over to a more peaceful country.

Captain Laurence felt at least something of shame at the position in which he found himself, but in the presence of the Duke and his evil counsellor, Lord Wargrove, he was compelled to be silent. He could not even send a message to the girl's father, for the Prince's suite and the senior officers of his regiment were the guests of Adam Ferris at Cairn Ferris.

"Your Highness will remember," he ventured to suggest, "that these Galloway squires are apt to carry the vendetta rather far. They are not so easily bought off with a title as others farther south."

"Nonsense," said the Duke, "if the girl's father does not see reason—why, Julian Wemyss at least knows what is good for his niece. She had better be a peeress in her own right and married with the left hand to my father's son, than stay here to spend her life with the first clodhopper who will make her his house-keeper, instead of, what she was born to be, the toast of London society."

"You are sure about the title," queried my Lord Wargrove cynically, "or are you only going to promise like the rest of them?"

"Oh," said the Duke, "I am sure George owes me more than that. I am the only one of our family who has never pestered him. Besides, I have got him out of one or two difficult ditches in his life, and he will give me the title right enough if I get the girl."

"There will be some difficulty," said my Lord, thoughtfully rubbing his chin with his forefinger, "we shall have to depend on our own devices. The only great land-owner about here is old De Raincy up at the castle yonder. He hates the Ferrises like poison, but I do not see myself going up there and asking for the loan of his best horses in order

to carry off his enemy's daughter! A nice clean murder he might not object to as a fitting finish to the Ferris line, but not what your Royal Highness proposes to himself."

The Duke waved his hand carelessly.

"All that is for you to arrange—what else are you for? You are my Master of the Horse, and as I have none at present, it is your business to provide some for me! Now good-night to you—I must see that girl again to-morrow. Gad, when I once get her safe to Lyonesse House, she shall wear the cross-gartered sandals, the blue skirt with the red sash, and if London does not bow down and worship, I am no true son of my father."

. . . . . .

But the next day Patsy was still absent, greatly to the annoyance of the Duke. He had counted on a difficult but not unwilling captive. He judged from her easy familiarity in the matter of the wool-winding that he would have little difficulty in persuading her to make a dash for the liberty which would also be glory.

But all the morning the Duke waited in vain, and the strange thing about it was that neither at Abbey Burnfoot nor at Cairn Ferris did any one appear to be concerning themselves about daughter, niece or heiress.

The Duke and his party did not know that as Adam Ferris was making his evening round of the sheep on the hill, a plaided shepherd leaped a drystone dyke ten yards in front of him, and was followed by a shaggy, brown-eyed dog. The men exchanged a few words and then each went his own way. Adam Ferris was reassured as to his daughter, and as for Uncle Julian, busy with his guests, he understood that Patsy was safe with the Garlands at Glenanmays.

But instead Stair had convoyed her, with the utmost pains of wood and heather craft, to Ladykirk, where she had been received by Miss Aline with such quiet rejoicings as the staid little gentlewoman permitted herself.

Having housed his charge, Stair set himself to establish a guard about the old house. His two brothers and half a dozen other members of the band were easy to put hands

upon when wanted, but Stair needed some one above suspicion, who could come and go freely. He remembered, with a grimace, that the matter would certainly interest Louis Raincy, and accordingly he posted to Raincy Castle to find him, as soon as he had got Agnew and Fergus into position.

Louis Raincy needed no spur. In order to help he was willing to break all rules and dare all angers. He did not even pause to ask himself why Stair Garland was taking so deep a concern in the matter. Patsy was his Patsy, and he flattered himself that the young man from Glenanmays was only recognising his rights by coming to ask for his assistance.

Louis Raincy was Galloway bred. He knew the farmers' sons of the whole district. He had always met them, played with them, and, on fit occasion, fought with them as equals. Only he did not trouble his grandfather with the closeness of his acquaintance with his neighbours. The old gentleman would neither have understood nor approved. He himself had always stood aloof, and he desired no better than that his heir should follow in his feudal footsteps.

More than this, Louis had made a trip or two with Stair Garland's Free Traders—of course, in the strictest privacy and in a disguise which was immediately penetrated by the whole convoy, though they pretended to accept Stair's statement that the young fellow with the false beard was an Isle of Man shipper who had come to see how his goods were disposed of.

The band thought no worse of Stair for trying to throw dust in their eyes, but an Isle of Man shipper in possession of two spirited Castle Raincy horses was too much for them. They laughed as they rode and wondered how the heir of Raincy would explain matters to the Earl if the business culminated in a tussle.

But Louis had come out all safe, and though he openly flouted the Free Trade with the young men of his own rank, there was no part of his past, except only his talks with Patsy in the hollow of the old beech bole, which returned to

him with such a flavour of fresh, glad youth as the " run " in which he had taken part.

So now that he was again to do something which would lead him out on the hills of heather in the misty shining of the moon or under the plush-spangled glitter of the midnight stars, he went off in high spirits to take his groom into his confidence and have the horses ready.

Obscurely, however, he felt that he was about to take part in a struggle for Patsy. It was to be a fight, not so much against danger from unscrupulous dandies like the Duke of Lyonesse and his acolyte, my Lord of Wargrove, as between Stair and himself. Louis de Raincy himself was " of as good blood as the King, only not so rich," as say the Spaniards. But this restless, stern-visaged Stair Garland, with his curious Viking fixity of gaze, what was his position towards Patsy ? Was it all only friendship for the confidant of his sister ? Louis Raincy's own hopes and purposes were of the vaguest. He did not even know whether he himself loved Patsy, but he was quite clear on the chapter of nobody else having her if he could help it.

CHAPTER IX

HIS LIFE IN HIS HAND

Louis Raincy rode right up to the door of Ladykirk and asked to see Miss Aline, with whom he had always been a great favourite. As a boy he had loved to play about her shrubberies. He remembered still the quaint smell of the damp pine-needles on the ground, the bitterness of laurel leaves which he broke across the centre and nibbled at, and above all, the long pleasant days of Miss Aline's jam-making, when he skirmished in and out and all about the kitchen and pantry, getting in everybody's way. Why, his very breath smelled sweet to himself after he had cleaned out brass pan after brass pan, with that worn spoon of horn warranted not to scratch, kept and supplied by Miss Aline for the purpose.

Now he was grown up. School and college had passed him by, and much to his own astonishment had left him in many ways as much a boy as ever. He had not been allowed to enter either of the fighting services, so he took what of adventure the country afforded—the rustic merry-making of the "Kirn" in the days of harvest home, the coastwise adventure of ships, and the midnight raid of the Free Traders with their clanking keg-irons and long defiles of pack-horses crowning the fells and bending away towards the North star and safety.

Now Miss Aline greeted him cheerfully as he came in through the great doors of the court-yard which had been shut that morning for the first time since her father's funeral.

"Ah, Louis," she cried at sight of him, "it is easy to guess what brings you to my door so early in the morning.

It is long since the days of the brass preserving-pan. Laddie, I'm feared that 'tis quite another berrying of sweets which brings you so fast and so far!"

"Miss Aline," said the lad, with a frankness which made the good chatelaine like him the better; "I rode over to see Patsy Ferris. I must hear what all this is about the Duke of Lyonesse."

"Nothing, so far as I can hear, Louis," said Miss Aline; "but our maid is afraid, and her father's house and her uncle's are both as full of soldiers and ribaldry as ever in the times of the Covenant. So where should she come if not to me? It was more wisely done than I could have expected from that 'fechtin' fule' of a Stair Garland."

Louis Raincy saw Patsy. She was sitting in Miss Aline's own room among the simple daintiness of many white linen "spreads" with raised broidery, the work of Miss Aline's own hands. Here she told him her determination to keep out of the way till the Prince and his train had left the country. The reasons for her instinctive dislike of her uncle's guest were not clear to any except herself, but on these Louis did not insist. It was enough that Patsy was so minded. In any case he wished her to know that he would follow the movements of the enemy with care, and warn her of their intentions. Captain Laurence, especially, was a free talker, and might let slip useful information. He, Louis, would ride over to headquarters that very afternoon, and, if Laurence was still absent, he would get an orderly to find him.

Thus was Patsy equipped with two cavaliers of courage and address, one of whom had his entries everywhere, while the other possessed the supreme skill of sea, shore, morass, hill, and heather, which comes only after generations of practice. But against them they had a man infinitely subtle and wholly without scruple. Eben McClure was of that breed of Galloway Scot, which having been kicked and humiliated in youth for lack of strength and courage, pays back his own people by treachery with interest thereto.

The like of Eben McClure had tracked with Lag when he made his tours among his neighbours, with confiscation and fine for a main object, and the murder of this or that man of prayer, covenant-keeper or Bible-carrier, as only a wayside accident. Now Galloway is half Celtic, and the other half, at least till the Ayrshire invasion, was mostly Norse. So McClure was hated with all the Celtic vehemence which does not stop short of blood. He was the salaried betrayer of his own, and in time, unless he could make enough money and remove himself to some far hiding-place, would assuredly die the death which such men die.

Of this, of course, he was perfectly aware, and had arranged his life accordingly.

In the meantime he watched and pondered. He disguised himself and made night journeys that he might learn what would suit his purpose. He could be in turn an Irish drover, a Loch Fyne fisherman, a moor shepherd, a flourishing burgess of Lanark or Ruglen, even an enterprising spirit dealer from Edinburgh or Dundee, with facilities for storage of casks when the Solway undutied cargoes should reach these cities.

And the marvel was that in none of his personations had he yet been caught. In proof of which he was still alive, but McClure confessed to himself that it was only a matter of time. He must make a grand stroke for fortune —quick fortune, and then bolt for it. For his heart was sick with thinking on the gunshot from behind the hedge or the knife between his shoulders. He never now went to his own parish of Stoneykirk where his father had been a well-doing packman—which is to say, a travelling merchant of silks and laces. McClure knew that he was in danger anywhere west of the Cree, but the danger increased as he went westwards, and in his own parish of Stoneykirk there were at least a score of young blades who would have taken his life with as little thought as they would have blooded a pig—aye, and had sworn so to do, *handfasted* upon it, kissing alternately Bible and cold steel.

It was no difficult matter for McClure to possess himself of the unavowed reason of my Lord Wargrove's ardent search for a carriage and horses. Clearly it was for a secret purpose—one that could not be declared. Because in any other case Lord Wargrove had only to take the pair which belonged to his host, or more easily still, Adam Ferris's in the north end of the Glen. If these were not regal enough, Earl Raincy had in his stables the finest horses in the county, and would certainly, though of old Jacobite stock, not refuse them to the King's son, albeit only a Guelph. Then there was old Sir Bunny Bunny. His wife would gladly have harnessed the horses herself and put her husband on the box, if only she had suspected a desire which she could have treated as a royal command.

As for the purpose, Eben McClure was in no greater difficulty. What but a pretty woman to run away with, did any of the king's sons care for? There was but one such girl in the countryside. She had made the Duke hold wool for her—many hanks, it was said in the regiment —and he had fallen in love with her on the spot.

But that girl, whether taking alarm or to increase her value, had gone into hiding, and apparently no one knew where. It was certain that her kin at one time or another had dipped their fingers pretty deeply in the traffic. There were caves and hiding-places, which it would be death to search except with a company of sappers. And more than that, he would have to stay behind alone and face the back-stroke. He could not always ride out with the helmets of the dragoons making a hedge about him.

Now McClure was a clever man, and he had been with the soldiers that day when Whitefoot, questing for Jean, had entered the kitchen of the farm of Glenanmays. He had wondered at the persistency with which the dog had followed the girl. At first he had waited to see her give him something to eat from the debris of the meal which was being prepared for the soldiers.

But after Whitefoot had twice sniffed at the alms tossed him without touching the gift, still continuing to follow

Jean, now tugging at her apron-string and now licking her hand, McClure, a man of the country, began to suspect that the dog was a messenger from one of the lost Garland boys whom they had missed so narrowly the other day in the heather of the Wild of Blairmore.

So upon Jean's departure he stepped quietly to the door and noted that she took the way down the valley towards the shore. He had not thought much about it at the time, for at the moment all chasings of smugglers and expeditions in aid of the manning of the fleet were absolutely at a standstill. The Duke's arrival on the *Britomart* by way of Stranryan had mobilized all the forces of order, as escorts of safety or guards of honour. So there would be no more raids till His Royal Highness was safe across the Water of Nith.

There remained to McClure the alternative of following Jean on his own responsibility, but the Stoneykirker had far too great a respect for his skin to search a valley bristling like a thousand hedgehogs with all manner of thorn and gorse bushes, waved over with broom and darkened with undergrowth, any single clump of which might conceal half-a-dozen rifles, each with the eye of a sharpshooter behind it—a mere spark in the sheltering dusk, but quite enough to frighten most men in his position.

So, though strongly suspected, Jean sped on her way unopposed. McClure put the incident away in the pigeon-holes of his memory. It might be useful some day. He thought deeply upon the affair which now delayed Royalty and, incidentally, was stopping his business. If he could put the son of the King under a great obligation—he might at one stroke make his fortune and save his life. He had had enough of Galloway, and a permanent change of air was what he longed for—to a far land, under other skies, and among a people of a strange tongue, who had never heard of press-gangs and Solway smugglers.

CHAPTER X

THE WICKED LAYETH A SNARE

In the enforced leisure provided for him by the stoppage of compulsory recruitments, Eben McClure added to his knowledge. He left the men and women in the drama which was unrolling itself about Glenanmays to take care of themselves. He might not have had any the least interest in them. He gave his whole thought to Whitefoot, Stair's lean, shaggy collie.

By observation he obtained a good working knowledge of the whereabouts of Whitefoot's master—not sufficient, certainly, to act upon if it had been a case of capture. But all the same near enough to enable him to keep well out of Stair Garland's way, which at the moment was what he most desired.

He rather despised the heather-craft of the other brothers, Fergus and Agnew Garland, and he gave never a thought to Godfrey McCulloch or the Free Trade band, which, he knew, was busy running in small cargoes as quickly as possible during the blessed time of relief from military and naval supervision.

But Stair Garland was another matter. Instinctively the spy knew his danger. This was not a man to hesitate about pulling a trigger, and his life, in the hollow of Stair Garland's hand, would weigh no heavier than a puff of dandelion smoke which a gust of wind carries along with it. So from his first acquaintance with him the spy had given Stair a wide berth.

As the result of many observations and much reflection, McClure decided that the lurking-place of this dangerous second son of the house of Glenanmays was on the hill

called Knock Minto, a rocky, irregular mass, shaped like the knuckles of a clenched fist.

The summit overlooked the wide Bay of Luce, and the spy had remarked thin columns of smoke rising up into the twilight, and lights which glittered a moment and then were shut off in the short, pearl-grey nights of later June, when the heavens are filled with quite useless stars, and the darkness never altogether falls upon the earth.

Cargoes were being run on the east side—of that he was assured. But after all that was no business of his. Eben found it more in his way to watch Whitefoot. He had attempted, in the farm kitchen of Glenanmays, to make friends with the collie, but a swift upward curl of the lip and baring of the teeth, accompanied by a deep, snorting growl, warned him that Whitefoot would have none of him.

Nevertheless, the dog went and came freely and as the spy made no further advances, Whitefoot soon ceased to regard him at all. And ever more curiously Eben McClure kept his eyes on the outgoings and incomings of Whitefoot.

And so it was that one still afternoon he found himself hidden under the dense greenish-black umbrella of a yew tree, lying prone on the ivied wall of the orchard of Ladykirk and listening to the talk of Patsy and Miss Aline, who were sitting beneath in a creeper-covered " tonelle," work-baskets by their sides, and as peaceful as if Ladykirk had been Eden on the eve of the coming of the serpent.

" Well," said Miss Aline, a little pleasantly tremulous with a sense of living among wild adventure, " have you had any news to-day ? I saw your four-footed friend waiting for you at the corner of the shrubbery ! "

" My Lord Wargrove has been to call upon Earl Raincy at the Castle," said Patsy with unusual demureness. " Louis could not tell what he wanted, but at any rate Earl Raincy promptly sent him and his insolence to—a place you have heard of in church. He said it so loud and plain that the whole house heard him, and he added remarks about royal dukes which would have brought him to the

scaffold along with his grandfather, if only he had lived a century earlier."

"Perhaps the man only wanted to find out if you were there. Well, now—" Miss Aline pondered, "the thing is not so foolish as it looks. For little Lady Raincy, Louis's mother, might have secreted you somewhere and never told the earl. The Castle is big enough, I'm sure. But, my dear, you are better here. I am glad that you gave me the preference."

At this moment there was a stir up at the house of Ladykirk, whereupon the spy modestly retired. He did not mind listening to the talk of women, spread-eagled on the wall and hidden by the yew shade, but then, again, he might chance upon men who were looking for him and find himself very suddenly with a gunshot through him, or packed along with the cockroaches in the grimy hold of the *Good Intent*. Captain Penman was a singularly unsociable shipmate at the best of times for a man of Eben's profession, and might even go the length of throwing him overboard some dark night, merely, as it were, in order to lighten ship.

So the spy betook himself to a little fir-wood which commanded the entrance of Ladykirk, the avenue, the flowery borders of the parterres, the laurel copses, and the clumps of rhododendron through which the white statues peered.

McClure was not long in finding out that Whitefoot had one favourite mode of entering Ladykirk policies, a way contrived by himself. At the corner of the vegetable garden the wall ran to the edge of a ha-ha and there stopped short. A beech hedge met the masonry at right angles, and just at the point of juncture the hedge thinned off a little. Whitefoot had observed this, and was in the habit of racing like an arrow towards it, and taking a leap across the ha-ha. Then, with his nose close to the ground, he passed through the hole in the beech-hedge with undiminished speed, skirted a flourishing rhubarb plantation, and so emerged into the shaded path which led directly to the back door of the house.

As Eben McClure lay and watched, a plan flashed into his mind. By it he saw that he would put the son of the King, and with him my Lord of Wargrove, under everlasting obligations—such obligations as could not be denied or escaped. Scottish law did not treat the abduction of heiresses against their will in a gentle spirit, and before the northern courts the son of the King would be in no better case than the sons of Rob Roy, with whose exploits in this direction a taste for the reading of chap-books had made him familiar.

McClure had not the least doubt that, against his own judgment, Lord Wargrove had been compelled to call at Castle Raincy to ask for the loan of a carriage and horses, only to receive a rebuff from the haughty old Jacobite who held rule there.

Clearly, then, the princely party at Abbey Burnfoot must want assistance very badly, and would be willing to pay very highly for it. He, Eben McClure, was the man who would supply all that was necessary. He felt already that modest pride which comes to an intelligent, fore-thoughted man among a people of no initiative. He would take the whole matter into his own care. Single-handed he would carry it through, but at a price, a price to be arranged beforehand.

Now Eben McClure of Stoneykirk, though held a traitor by the countryside, came of no mean parentage. The McClures are a strong clan, and the running of many cargoes has made them well-to-do. The day of their desperate deeds is over. They prefer the cattle-market and the tussle of wit with wit, matching knowledge with cunning in the arena of the " private bargain."

All these and an infinity of other characteristics were united in the burly person of Kennedy McClure of Supsorrow. A man of sixty, stout and hardy, he still added field to field. He laid out every shilling of his money wisely. He spent little, gave less, and swallowed up every neighbouring piece of property which came into the market. If a man were in difficulties, Kennedy McClure waited for the time when he would be ready to accept an offer for such and

such a meadow or stretch of cornland which he had long coveted. He would not cheat. He would pay the proper price in ringing guineas, but he must have the first chance. And then, overjoyed by the mere sight of the added acres, he would pace the newly acquired territory with a step to which a full figure lent importance, a certain pride of bearing which went well with the length of his purse, and the authority which could be felt in his least word.

Kennedy kept up a certain parade of humility, but his looks and walk belied him. A Royal Commission once approached him with a summons to give evidence as to a plague of voles which was desolating the fertile fields of the South-west, and his opinion was valuable because he had recently acquired by purchase the great, barren hill called Ben Marrick.

"What is your business?" said the Chairman, a profound English agriculturist, with as profound an ignorance of the fine shades of Galloway speech.

"*I work on the land,*" said Kennedy McClure with smileless deference.

"What, a farm labourer?" said the great man, "this is first-hand evidence indeed. Well, I suppose that you have studied the devastation caused by these animals on the—the—what is the name—ah, yes, Ben Marrick?"

"My lord," said the many-acred "farm labourer," "there is never a vole on the Ben o' Marrick. The vole is far ower good a judge of land to waste his time on the Marrick."

It needed the intervention of the local clerk of the commission to convince the chairman that he was talking to a man far richer than himself, besides being experienced and sage to the confines of rural wisdom.

It was to this kinsman that Eben McClure was thinking of making an appeal. He knew that along with the property, Kennedy had taken over the carriage and capitally matched horses of the late laird of Glen Marrick. Perhaps he would lend them to a kinsman in order to oblige a Royal Duke. He need not be too precise as to what the

Royal Duke wanted them for if the pay were good and sure.

Accordingly Eben the Spy went to Supsorrow with an unquiet heart. He was not at all assured how he would be received. He guessed, however, that a promise made to the laird his cousin, that his herds and workmen, his plough-hands and cattlemen should be respected by the superintendent of the "press," might do much to calm the first indignation which his proposal would infallibly arouse.

Then Kennedy of Supsorrow hated the Free Traders, because they drew away young men from his service and gave them false notions as to the amount of yearly wage with which they ought to be content.

When a man can make as much by a couple of successful "runs" as by a year's hard work at Supsorrow, he naturally began to reflect. And when the Laird approached him to know if he were "staying on" as term-time approached, the bargain became more difficult to strike. In many cases it was finally understood between contracting parties that the wages should continue the same, but that the occasional absence of a pair of horses from the stables was a matter to which the master should shut his eyes so long as he was satisfied in other ways.

Now Laird Supsorrow did not like this, but was compelled to like it or leave it. He had so added to his fields, multiplied his acres, extended the territories on which fed his flocks and herds, that service he must have, and that of the best. He must be able to trust his men—for, though he rode from dawn to dark, he could not overlook a tenth of his belongings.

Still, though compelled to submit, Kennedy McClure bore a secret grudge to the Traffic, all the more bitter that he did not venture to show it in any way.

Eben found him getting ready to ride forth to look at a new farm for the purchase of which he was negotiating.

The spy, in spite of his recent assumption of military port, made but a poor figure beside his wealthy kinsman. The Laird wore his light blue riding-coat with silver buttons,

his long-flapped waistcoat, from which at every other minute he took the gold snuff-box that was his pride, white knee breeches, and rig-and-fur stockings of a tender grey-blue, finished by stout black shoes with silver buckles of the solidest. He clung to his old weather-beaten cocked hat, which, in the course of argument, he would often take from his head and tap upon the palm of his hand to emphasize his points.

"Kinsman," said Eben McClure, bowing humbly, without venturing to shake hands, "I have need of a word with you. I shall not in any way detain you, but it is a matter of His Majesty's Service, which I judge it will be for your good to know."

The Laird of Supsorrow regarded his cousin with no very friendly eye, and pulling his gold snuff-box from his pocket, began to tap it in an irritated, impatient manner.

"Ye are not thinking of coming here to borrow money as ye did the time before?" he growled, "for if so, I tell you plainly that there is not the half of a copper doit for you here. Besides, I hear that you are doing very comfortably in the King's service, making yourself rich as well as universally beloved, and a credit to your name!"

Eben McClure took the flout as he would have taken a kick from that honoured double-soled shoe.

"Cousin Kennedy," he said, "I have no purpose but to do you service. As you are good enough to remark, I have nothing to complain of in the service of His Majesty, and it shall be my first duty and pleasure to repay to you the little advance you were good enough to make me—with interest."

Kennedy McClure looked his visitor over coolly.

"You have been robbing the stage?" he demanded.

The spy laughed, but it was a laugh from the teeth outwards. As the French say, he laughed "yellow." Nevertheless, he drew a pocket-book from his breast, and suggested that if his kind cousin could spare the time, perhaps it would be as well for them to speak together in a more retired place.

"Come ben," said the Laird of Supsorrow, "there is no close time for the receiving of siller."

They passed through a vast kitchen where everything was in the pink of order. The tables were ranged in the middle. An array of pots brooded over the fire, so close that they jostled each other. To the right the eyes of the spy fell with respect upon the great oaken chair of the master. For in this also the Laird had kept up the patriarchal style. He still willingly, and with a certain gusto, took his seat in his own kitchen, where he smoked and talked at ease with the men and maids as they came or went. A little cupboard with a double door was fixed above the chair within reach of his hand. It contained his pipes and his library—a Bible, the poems of Burns, Boston's *Fourfold State*, *The Cloud of Witnesses*, a Grey's *Tables*, a book on mensuration, Fowler's *Horse Doctor*, and many almanacs tied in packets.

The master of all these strode through the kitchen, opened a door, passed down a long passage, and ushered his relative into a room full of stacked papers, driving whips, favourite bits and bridles. The grate was still full of burned papers. A tall five-branched silver candlestick stood in the middle of the table, and along the wall were ranged a few chairs of the rudest fashioning, but all polished with use.

He motioned to Eben of Stoneykirk to take a seat in one of these and proceed with what he had to say.

"I can only give you a quarter of an hour," said the Laird, "I have an appointment with that wee wastrel of a man-of-law, McKinstrie, down at the Foulds. He is coming express-like from Cairnryan to meet me—and it's me that will have to pay for his time!"

Whereupon the spy opened out his case and the great man of horses and beeves listened intently. The Duke of Lyonesse wanted a carriage to drive into England, where his brother, the Duke of Cumberland, had an estate. The neighbouring great lords were all Jacobites at heart. Yes, even the Earl Raincy had point-blank refused his carriage—

a service such as any gentleman might render to another, whatever might be his political opinions.

"And so you come to me to hire," said Kennedy, scornfully, "I do not keep post-chaises, man."

"No, cousin, no," said the spy earnestly, "your name need not appear at all. Only leave the door of your stable unlocked, or at least so barred that we can easily get through without doing damage, and we will answer for the rest. And I will pay you fifty pounds down on the spot."

"That is not anything near the value of the horses," said Laird Supsorrow, keeping his eyes fixed upon his cousin so that he might divine where the trap lay.

"No," said Eben, "it is not. But if one of your men rides after—that is, a few hours in the rear, the horses and carriage will be delivered to him at the boundary of the kingdom of Scotland just at the farther side of the Gretna bridge——"

"H-m-m," said Kennedy McClure, "if you deposit the money here, and obtain a written security from his Highness to indemnify me for any damage to the horses or vehicle, you are at liberty to do as you like with Ben Marrick's equipage. On my side I shall arrange with Saunders Grieve, my yardsman, that you shall not be disquieted in taking them."

"Would not a word from my Lord Wargrove suit you?"

"No," thundered the Laird, "let me have his Highness's fist and seal or I shall not let a hoof leave the yard! What is Lord Wargrove to me?"

"Very well, then, cousin. I will send you the document by a sure hand, and I leave the fifty pounds in your hands now, merely taking your receipt for the Duke's satisfaction."

The Spy well knew that there was not the least possibility of getting his Royal Highness to sign such a document, but as he himself was leaving the country for good at any rate, he did not mind adding a little forgery to his other necessary arrangements. Paper and seal were easily accessible in the parlour, where the Duke often kept Eben waiting for hours. He was an expert in other people's

penmanship, and the princely scrawl would not present the least difficulty to him. Still, in case of accident, it would be as well to keep back the document till the last possible moment. For his cousin was not a man to be easily hoodwinked, and he might take it into his head to ride over, document in hand, to require the prince acknowledge his own signature.

As he rode away the spy said to himself, "Yes, forgery it is, of course. But sometimes it is worth while tossing a penny to see which it shall be—fortune, or the hangman's rope."

CHAPTER XI

THE TRAMPLING OF HORSE IN THE NIGHT

Whitefoot the brown-eyed, intent on his business, was taking his usual route to Ladykirk. It was a dark night, but he could see more and farther than any man. He knew that Patsy would be waiting for him in the kitchen of Miss Aline's house, that she would have something extremely toothsome for him to eat while she was preparing the collar which in a few minutes would be slipped about his neck. Then he would be free to return to his master in the secret den which he had chosen to sleep in that night.

Whitefoot moved like a lank and ghostly wolf through the tall grass and crops, skirting the barer places and keeping close in to the dusky verges of the hedges. All went well with him till he took the ha-ha ditch at his usual racing pace, and was instantly wrapped up by a net into a kicking ball exactly like a rabbit at the mouth of a hole. A bag was somehow slipped over his head, and inside it he could neither bite nor bark. His nose was tightly held and his collar removed.

It seemed ages to Whitefoot before he found himself free again. Then he wasted no time, but made one bolt for the kitchen door of Ladykirk. It was open, and he entered all dazed and shaking. He had felt the hands of men about him, yet they had done him no harm. He shook himself joint by joint to make sure. All was right. Perhaps they were only out hunting and he had deranged them. Whitefoot knew quite well what it was to chase rabbits and hares into just such nets. At any rate he could not explain, but took the piece of beef which Patsy had waiting for him with satisfaction.

On his return Whitefoot tried the garden-hedge farther down, but here again he found himself in a bag. Evidently they were netting the whole of the garden. He lay still, certain now that they meant him no harm, and, indeed, in a shorter far time than before he was loose and scouring away into the shadows of the woods. This time the man into whose nets he had blundered, merely stood behind a tree, and at sight of his shadowy figure Whitefoot got himself out of the neighbourhood. Men with nets, guns that went off with a bang, and dead things that kicked and bled were connected in Whitefoot's mind with such night expeditions. So no wonder he betook himself away as quickly and as unobtrusively as possible.

But the message that Patsy received was this :

" Important see you to-morrow night, smaller avenue gate, ten o'clock.

" JEAN."

To this Patsy had replied, moistening the stub of her " killevine " in her mouth as she had been wont to do at school :

" Dear Jean,—of course I shall be there ! "

. . . . . .

Never fell gloaming so slowly for Spy Eben of Stoneykirk as that of Friday the 26th of June. The red in the west mounted ever higher, revealing and painting infinitely the remote strata of cloud-flecks which thinned out into the azure. At half-past nine it seemed that ten o'clock would find the old military road upon which debouched the little avenue of Ladykirk, still as bright as upon a mellow afternoon.

But arriving suddenly and surpassing all his hopes, a wind from the sea began to blow, bringing up the outside fog from the ocean. First it came in puffs and slow dragging wreaths, but afterwards with the march of steady army corps which sponged out the house, the trees and the road.

By ten all was slaty grey dusk, into which a man could

stretch his hand well out of his own sight. The heart of the Spy exulted. It was a thing so unexpected, and (for he remembered his upbringing) so providential, that he almost returned thanks, as after an unexpected meal.

He did so quite when a little after the hour rapid feet pattered down the lesser avenue, a hand was thrust from a shawl, and Patsy's voice called "Jean—where are you, Jean?"

In an instant the girl was swept from her feet, enveloped in a great travelling coat, and carried to a carriage that was in waiting close against the hedge under the black shadow of the beech leaves. Patsy had no time to cry out. She was too astonished. Besides, the large hand of Eben the Spy was pressed against her mouth. She felt herself thrust without ceremony into a carriage on the front seat of which sat two men, dark shadows seen for a moment as the door opened, against the pour of the sea-mist past the windows.

"I think," said a voice, "you had better let me manage her—for the present, that is. She has just bitten me. Ah—quick with that Indian shawl. Thank you, my Lord. We must keep her from crying out. Now, my pretty, there you are with your ankles tied and your hands kept from mischief, so we shall soon reconcile ourselves!"

Patsy strove vehemently but the arm about her was strong. Her feet and hands were fastened with soft swathes of silk, while about her mouth and chin the Indian shawl proved an efficient gag.

She could hear the clatter of the horses' feet, and was conscious of the rapid movement of the carriage. Once or twice the man on the front seat leaned over and spoke soothingly to her, or so at least it seemed. But he appeared to be sorely at a loss for words.

"You will be glad of all this to-morrow," she recognised the thick voice of the man whom she had made hold her wool; "you shall be my little black pearl!"

"Better let her come round of herself, your Highness," said the man who held her. "They take it a bit hard

at first, but after the anger and the tears, then it will be time to argue with her."

The man addressed as "your Highness" dropped back into his seat, and for a long time nothing was heard but the changeful clatter of the shod feet of horses. Patsy sat muffled and helpless, conscious that she had been trapped, but determined that since somebody had dared, somebody also should die before a hand was laid upon her. She felt strangely at home. Her Pictish blood spoke—perhaps still older bloods, too, within her. It was somehow perfectly natural that a man should try to carry her off. She was obscurely but surely aware that men of her race had done things like that. But then, also, they did them at their peril. And Patsy the Pict felt herself strong enough for these things. It was the age of Miss Jane Austen's dainty heroines. Miss Fanny Burney was still at court, writing in her *Diary* that the King was very happy and innocent, imagining himself each day in intimate converse with the angels.

But Patsy had no idea of fainting. Tears were far indeed from her eyes. She was only calling herself a fool, and wishing that she had thought to bring her little dagger with her—the double-edged one that Julian Wemyss had given her on his return from the Canary Islands, black leather sheath scrolled in gold to be worn in the stocking. Still since she had not that, why, she would take the first weapon that came to her hand. And whenever they ran clear of the fog, which happened at the top of every considerable hill, her little white teeth gleamed in the darkness with something like anticipation.

. . . . . .

"Up, Louis, out with you—they are away! The Prince has carried off Patsy! Here is your pony. Get in the saddle. I must manage without!"

Unceremoniously Stair Garland awaked Louis from his drowse in the cave's mouth. He had ridden down from Castle Raincy to see if he could help. The moment had come and Stair had not disappointed him.

"They are already on the road—in a carriage—Kennedy McClure's, I think," said Stair; "stand still there, Derry Down, or by the Holy——!" And he leaped into his saddle which was no more than the corn-sack doubled and fastened close with broad bands of tape, used to go under the heavy pack-saddles when a run was forward.

"Where have they gone? Are they far ahead of us?" questioned Louis.

"They are on the military road—in a carriage and pair, going west. They cannot get off it. But if you can trust your pony, we can cut corners and ride as we like."

"Of course," said Louis; "show me the way—you know it better than I!"

So, each on his deft, sure-footed Galloway pony, like their ancestors of the English forays of which Froissart tells, the two lads plunged into the night.

They sped along the barren side of the Moors, taking any path or none, whisking through the tall broom and leaping the whins. The ponies took naturally to the sport. Sometimes the going was heavier, but not for so little did the animals slacken. They were to the manner born, and minded no more the deep black ruts of the peat, which in the more easterly country are called "hags," than the open military road along which the carriage was bowling.

The heather was mostly short and easy—"bull's fell" heather as it was named. Tall cotton grass flaunted up suddenly through the slaty haze of the night of pursuit. The plant called "Honesty" with its flat, white seed vessels, gaunt and startling, swished past them, the dry pods crackling among their horses' legs.

Mostly they rode easily, swaying to the movements of their beasts, letting the little horses do the work as the Lord of the moors gave them wisdom to do—using no whip or spur—these were not needed—and very little guidance of rein. The little Galloways, Louis's black "Honeypot" and Stair's "Derry Down," picked their way swiftly and cleanly. They might have been steering by the stars.

But it was only their instinct sense of smell which told them when they were approaching a bog too soft to be negotiated. Then they would turn their faces to the hill, questing for the good odour of the " gall " or bog-myrtle, which is the characteristic smell of good going in the Galloway wilderness. Stretches of that delightful plant surround all bogs, morasses and other dangerously wet spots, but the little beasts knew that so far as they were concerned they were safe where the gall bushes grew. And, indeed, it was well to keep wide. On the moorland face the silver flowes glittered unwholesomely, deadly as quicksands in the Bay of Luce. It was marvellous to see how gingerly the little beasts footed it in such places. Never did they let a foot sink to the fetlock. With a quick flinging swerve, they cast themselves to the side of safety and the foot would come loose with the " cloop " of an opening bottle.

Sometimes the sand was firm, and then they would scour fearlessly along it with many tossings of their heads and playful attempts at biting one another. But so soon as they came upon the green froth of the " quaking bogs " or the snake-bell shine of the shivering sands, it was each for himself again—or rather for himself and herself, for Stair's mount was a small barren mare, which in such things is even better than a horse, better and more cunning, besides being more companionable for her journey-mate.

They rode through banks of midges so huge that they almost reached the dignity of mosquitos. For where in the world except on the lonely road past Clatteringshaws and the Loch of the Lilies, can you meet with midges which for number and ferocity can compare with those of the Moors of Wigtonshire? Sometimes the two lads, riding easy, would come to water. This was a negociation which was better left to Honeypot and Derry Down. If the water was black and peaty with a heavy smell of rotting vegetation, the ponies knew it, but if they scented the fresh rush of a hill burn, or the soft coolness of an arm of sandy-bottomed loch, then Louis and Stair would suddenly feel the cool sluicing of water about their legs,

causing them to turn their pistol belts over their shoulders, where Stair already carried his long-barrelled gun with the stock upwards.

"We shall close upon them at the White Loch," said Stair, during one of these pauses. "They have a long detour to make. I would rather have waited till they had got to the crossing of the Tarf, but that is too far for our beasts on these short nights of June."

(He meant the Wigtonshire Tarf, which comes from far Laggangairn and the Bloody Moss, not the shorter, fiercer tributary of the Dee.)

"The White Loch be it," said Louis, for indeed it was all the same to him. He was out to fight for Patsy, and fight he would. He did not care what his grandfather might say, nor what penalties he might incur. What Stair Garland was ready to do for Patsy, surely he had the better right to be a partner in.

They drove through a herd of kyloes recently sent down from Highland hills to try their luck on Galloway heather. The horns clicked sharply together. There was a whisking scamper of hoofs as the beasts fled every way, only to bunch anew a little farther out of the path of these wild riders.

Now Stair and Louis found themselves on a kind of track, narrow and stony underfoot. The blackfaced sheep of the hills had made it so, with their little pattering trotters which dug out a stone at every step. Above was a waste of boulder, grey teeth grinning through the black heather. They began to see more clearly, for they were now far above the mist, into which they would not again need to descend till they should reach the White Loch and cut down to head off their prey, comfortably rolling Gretnawards—a duke royal, a peer of the realm, and a spy with a promise of fortune in his breastpocket, all looking after Patsy Ferris, the daughter of the Picts, and drawn by Kennedy McClure's excellent pair of horses along the best road in all the south country.

Sometimes a wilder track led Stair and Louis unbreathed

across an open moor, the path being too narrow to ride abreast, when it was the mare's privilege to lead. She snuffed the air, and even while keeping to her pace, would reach forward her neck to smell the better. Derry Down knew that she was on one of the old "drove roads" by which horses had been driven to the eastern fairs and trysts for hundreds of years, before ever Lord Hillsborough came into the land, or the pick of a governmental sapper had been set in the heather.

Generally the pursuers kept wide of all human habitation. They could see the stars now, and so in a manner choose their direction. The details they left to the horses, and especially to Stair's wise "Derry Down." But the scent of a single "keeping" peat in a herd's house would send them all up the hill again. It had been carefully bent over the red ashes to hold them alight till the morrow, for the goodwife's greater ease on rising, and also because it was the immemorial custom of all Moor folk from Killantringan even to the Moss of Cree.

A fly-by-night bumblebee, honey-drunk, followed the cavalcade blunderingly a little way, perhaps in the hope that they who seemed to know their way so well, might lead him safely home, ring the door-bell for him, and tumble him into the lobby of his home under the bent tussock where he fain would be. Nevermore would he stay out so late again. So much he would gladly promise the reproachful wife who had sat up for his coming.

But the ponies drew away, and there was nothing for him but to snuggle down with a buzz and a grumble among the wet bluebells and wait for daybreak, for sobriety and with it a new sense of direction.

Occasionally Stair urged his mare forward, though only by a closer clip of the knees. She was a willing beast, and responded gallantly. It was easy going now, and the night was speeding quickly. Presently they would need to go down the side of the fell, and skirt the White Water to their ambush place at the head of the Loch. Of this last, Stair thought exclusively. But with more of the mystery of

an older race about him, Louis Raincy listened to the firs whispering confidences overhead as they sped downhill. Then came the birches' clean rustle—for the burn they were following led them among copses where the legs of the horses risped with a pleasant sound through the lash of leaves.

The ponies were going easily now, their masters being sure that they were far in advance of their time. They had cut the circle cleanly, and those they were pursuing would have to make nearly three times the distance they had traversed.

Besides Patsy's captors did not know they were being pursued. Never once did the " clash of the spurs " warn them that Care and his horsemen rode behind.

As the two came down from the high moors, tracking cautiously through the woods and stray belts of culture which hung about the thatched steadings and shy, deep-hidden farm-towns, a wildness awoke in Stair Garland. The little mare, Derry Down, responded to his mood. She held her head high, and capered like an unbitted yearling fresh off the first spring pastures.

Louis rode more quietly and also more steadily, and especially so when at last they got down to a made road in the valley of the White Water. Here Louis had several times to urge his companion to save the beasts a little, for if they rescued Patsy, they would need to bring her home on one or the other of them.

" We have to settle our accounts first," said Stair, " then we will think about taking her back to those who knew so ill how to protect her ! "

He was silent a moment and then added as if in pity for Louis's ignorance. " See here, man, this is all my country. Think you there is a farm where I could not leave the ponies and get the loan of other ? We are on the main caravan trail of the Free Traffickers, and there are few hereabouts who would venture to refuse Stair Garland."

Perhaps there was some boyish pride in this, but Louis

had been long enough within the sound of the jingling anker chains and the creaking pack-saddles to know that Stair spoke well within the truth. He felt with a sudden pang that in this rescue of Patsy he was playing a very secondary part. But the true nobility of soul shown by Stair Garland was not at the time revealed to him. He did not understand the reason why Stair had brought him at all. It was because he disdained to take an advantage. He would not magnify himself in Patsy's eyes while Louis, unwarned, slept in his bed at Castle Raincy.

Whatever the odds against him, Stair would give his adversary the floor, and at the end of the day, accept the umpire's judgment as to which was the better man.

CHAPTER XII

PATSY'S RESCUE

LIKE a greyhound coursing sped the little mare. After Derry Down stretched the more sturdily built Honeypot. He made no flourishes with head or tail but simply laid well into his work, going so fast that his rider Louis Raincy seemed to be bending to meet a strong wind. The hedges and tree clumps poured behind as water from the prow of a wind-driven boat in a difficult sea-way.

Three or four times Louis tried to stop his companion, but Stair had a spot in his mind where he could hold up the carriage. It was a sharp angle of road, designed in days when levels and gradients were unthought of, and still permitted to linger on to the danger of travellers' necks. In fact the White Loch elbow remains to the moment of writing, in spite of all modern improvements, a trap for the unwary, merely because a laird's lodge-gate lies a few hundred feet to the north, and any new road must cut a shaving off the entrace to his avenue.

But that night Stair made use of the gates manorial. Tying their ponies to trees, they lifted the heavy gates off their hinges and "angled" them skilfully across the road so as to form a barrier which must stop the horses and carriage. Stair would have set up the barricade between the double turn of the S-shaped curve, but Louis pointed out that if the carriage went over the bridge, Patsy might very well be injured. So the gates were ultimately placed where the horses would be halted while ascending the long after slope with slackened pace.

Where Stair and Louis placed themselves, though some considerable way from the burn which ran at the bottom

of the defile, they were still in a very pit of darkness. The leaves were dense overhead, and only the white gates gleamed very faintly in the trough of gloom where ran the eastern military road.

Louis lay under a tremulous rustle of leaves, for the wind was coming in from the sea, and listened to the trill and chirrup of the burn which carried off the overflow of the White Loch, as it muttered over its sands or clattered across the loose round pebbles of its numerous shallows.

The lads waited long and anxiously, not that they had any fear of having missed their mark, for Stair had searched in vain in all the softest spots for any trace of carriage wheels. They *must* pass this way. They could not go off the road, because there was no other. But, what would have spoiled the matter more than a squadron of cavalry in attendance, was the fact that if they delayed much longer, the carriage would reach the Elbow of the White Water after daybreak.

From where they lay they could see the ragged fantastic line of the hills to the east behind which the sun would rise. Stair watched these anxiously. They had a clear hour before them, but unless the mist came up again with the tide, they could count on no more time.

Already out on the face of the moorland the curlews were crying tentatively one to the other. Louis would gladly have talked, but Stair sat grave and silent. At last, visibly unquiet, he betook himself up through the wood to the edge of an old turf-built fold where in summer the cows were wont to be milked. Here he occupied himself with the priming of his gun and looked to his pistols. An undefined glimmer from the sky and the absence of trees on the heathery slopes enabled him to dispense with other light.

In ten minutes he was back again by the side of Louis Raincy.

"They are coming," he whispered, "up yonder I heard the rumble of the carriage. Listen—we shall catch it in a minute."

Louis listened intently and at last could make out, from very far to the west, the rhythmic and yet changeful beating of the feet of horses. But it was not till the carriage had actually climbed to the summit and was rumbling down the slope that Stair Garland moved.

"I am going to meet them there at the gates," he said, "be you ready with the horses. There is a part of this business in which there is no need of your being mixed up, only see that Honeypot and Derry Down are ready for Patsy. If for any reason I cannot get away with you, take the upper side of the White Loch till you strike the old track by which we came, then give the little mare her head and she will carry you safe."

"But why will you not be with us? We can ride time about."

"There are certain risks," said Stair,—"I do not know what will come out of all this. But at any rate your business is to get Patsy home to her father's and then carry the word to my sister Jean that the house is to be strongly guarded. She will understand."

The carriage was very close now. They could hear the labouring of the horses, the wheezing of straining harness. Then the pole of the carriage became entangled with Stair's carefully angled lodge-gates. The coach stopped. The driver sprang from his seat and ran to keep his horses from plunging over into the ravine. An angry voice from the inside called out to know what was the matter.

A pistol shot rang out. Then several answered, followed by the roar of a fully charged gun, a turmoil of voices, the stamping of horses, and a voice that cried "They have killed the Prince! The Duke is shot!"

The next moment through the green velvety dark Louis heard footsteps approaching. Stair, his gun flung over his shoulder, had Patsy with him.

"Quick, up with you! There!"

He placed her on Derry Down.

"Now, Louis—off with you, and remember what I said. Keep the upper side of the valley, and if in difficulty let

the little mare lead. I shall follow, as soon as I can get a horse to ride. One of our lads live not far from here ! "

" You have not killed him ? " said Louis, anxiously.

" I do not know. I certainly let the marauding Turks have the benefit of a few slugs," said Stair with carelessness. " If his princeship is a little worse splintered than the others, why, so much the better. But they will all have a souvenir to carry away. Now, ride, and never mind me ! "

In ten minutes Louis and Patsy were fairly safe from pursuit—at least from any immediate pursuit. They followed the line of the White Loch—the shore sand gleaming like silver beneath them making the task a simple one. Then by easier gradients than the path by which they had so precipitately descended, Louis struck diagonally for the old drove road. As they mounted higher they became aware that the day was breaking behind the distant Minnegaff ridges—the hills of the great names, Bennanbrack, Benyellaray, Craignairny, The Spear of the Merrick, and the Dungeon of Buchan, coming up one by one in delicate aërial perspective.

In half an hour Louis Raincy could see Patsy's face suffused with eager joy, freedom and the red in the east together making it flush like a dusky peach.

" Oh, I am so glad," she broke out when at last they could ride together over a little stretch of bent, " I had not even my Canary Island knife or anything, but somehow I thought that you or Stair would follow me."

" It was all Stair's doing," said Louis, " he called me, and gave me the chance to help him when he could quite as well have taken one of his brothers, Fergus or Agnew."

" Why did he stay behind just now,? " Patsy asked. " If they capture him they will kill him."

" I think there is no great fear of that, for the present, at least," said Louis Raincy, loyally. " Stair Garland has many hiding-places. I don't believe any one can catch him in his own land. He is off to find a moor-pony and will ride after us as soon as it is safe. If not, he will come

home on foot, lying up in the daytime. He knows every farm and cothouse and is welcome at all. Sea-cave and moss-hag, wood-shelter and whin-bush, he knows every hidie-hole for forty mile."

Louis and Patsy kept so far to the north among the flowes of the moors that they never once came in sight of the road, along which all that day frenzied messengers tore east and west with tidings that the King's son had been murdered near the White Loch, by a gang of ruffians who had laid a trap and overturned his carriage.

So the two young people travelled in a great loneliness of plovers and curlews and peewits, all singing and calling and whistling their hardest. They saw the glimmer of a herd's house or two, faint whitewashed dots on the brown surface of the moor. But of living souls they met not one.

Nor had they seen anything of Stair when, at dusk, they breasted the last bosky eyebrow of Raincy territory which overhung the rich Ferris valleys, and saw beneath them, as it had been deserted, the House of Cairn Ferris. Windows had been knocked out. Household gear lay scattered in the yard and even littered the avenue. A great blackened oblong showed the position of a burned hay-mow.

Louis halted a moment, in doubt what he should do, and then seeing that there was no safety in such a place for Patsy, he turned the tired horses about and rode straight for the great towers of Castle Raincy which frowned above them out of the purple gloom of the woods.

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"Grandfather," said Louis, still holding Patsy by the hand as he penetrated unannounced into the Earl's study, "this is Miss Patricia Ferris. The Duke of Lyonesse laid a trap for her. He carried her off, bound and gagged, in Kennedy McClure's carriage, but Stair Garland and I rescued her. There was a fight and I believe the Duke is hurt, but it served him right. I took her home, but the house has been sacked. So I brought her to you!"

The old man, who had nightly cursed the Ferrises, root and branch, all his life, rose to his full height, for a moment

irresolute. Then he bowed, and took Patsy's hand in his.

"You are welcome," he said, "I am—hem—satisfied that my boy had the pluck to put a bullet into the Hanoverian swine. He came and asked for my carriage, curse his impudence—my carriage and horses to play his Guelphish pranks on honest men's daughters. Royal prince or no royal prince, I will stand by you, hang me if I don't! And when it comes to the House of Lords, I shall have a few truths to tell the whole royal gang which will make their ears tingle from the Regent himself to poor Silly Billy."

In the meanwhile no news of Stair. He had, as it seemed, been entirely blotted out. Had he fallen into the hands of the cavalry which after a fruitless search had sacked Cairn Ferris at their pleasure upon the first news of the killing of the king's son? They had departed to scour the easterly roads and had been seen no more in the valleys or on the heights of Raincy.

There was no news except that Kennedy McClure had been seen galloping eastward in frantic search of his carriage and horses. The former had been reported blown to flinders, and his two carefully matched horses killed by the bandits. So he was now riding in his shirt-sleeves, the cowrie shells at his watch fob clanging against the little bundle of keys he wore there. In his mind he was doing sums of which the main issues were, "What is the difference between the fifty pounds I have in hand and the value of the carriage and horses, and will my loss give me a claim on the royal family and the Government?" Kennedy McClure saw before him endless Court of Session pleas, with expenses mounting steadily up, and the verdict given in his favour upon appeal to the House of Lords.

The Laird of Supsorrow, who loved a good-going plea, felt vaguely consoled, but he spurred his beast all the same to find out what he had to go upon. That the whole countryside spoke of the young prince as dead was nothing to him. His horses and the precious chariot with the

yellow wheels, the pale blue body and linings were more to him than the whole royal house. There were a plenty of princes—and no great gain to the country either by all accounts! But he, Kennedy of Supsorrow, had only one chariot and one well-matched pair of carriage horses, for which he had paid out good golden guineas.

As he rode he heard the sound of horses galloping behind him. They turned out to be a patrol of dragoons from Cairnryan headed by Captain Laurence. That officer was in great fear for his commission, being in military command of the district; and though he had received the Prince's own orders to confine himself to his barracks that the ways might be clear, he could not hide from himself that if anything happened to the King's favourite son, he might as well send in his papers.

So whenever he crossed a coast-guardsman or even the most ignorant and harmless farm-lad, he shouted to him, "The Duke—the Duke! What of the Duke? Have they killed the Duke?"

To which Kennedy McClure of Supsorrow responded like an echo, "The horses—the horses?—What have they done to the horses? Have they killed my horses?"

CHAPTER XIII

PLOTS AND PRINCES

But the Duke of Lyonesse was not dead. He lay at the King's Arms in the town of Newton Douglas, well peppered with slugs, and swearing most royally. Lord Wargrove was alone in attendance upon him. One might well pity him, for his job was no pleasant one.

Eben the Spy had disappeared, and with him every stiver of the Prince's money, which had been kept in a leathern dispatch case carefully stowed beneath the seat of the carriage. His wallet of jewels, too, had vanished, so that the poor Duke had never a spare snuff-box or a change of rings.

More wonderful still was the official declaration made and sworn to before the Fiscal and Sheriff. The attack had been made entirely for the purpose of robbery, by Ebenezer McClure and a band of malefactors, collected by him for the purpose. In proof of which it was shown that the said Eben McClure had driven the carriage into a trap, previously laid with care in the dangerous defile of the White Water near where it enters into the loch of that name, that he had removed the Duke's treasure during the fight, and so escaped, mounted upon one of the horses which he had borrowed of his kinsman Kennedy of Supsorrow. The name of Patsy Ferris did not appear.

This explains why on arriving at Newton Douglas in search of his steeds, Kennedy McClure found himself pulled down from his horse, treated with much official roughness, and finally lodged in the town-house awaiting his removal to the gaol of Wigton. He began to think that the fifty pounds which had been paid down by Eben of Stoneykirk

constituted but a feeble consolation for losses such as his. The Duke could not see him. My Lord of Wargrove would not, and Captain Laurence, to whom in desperation he made his plea, consigned him with extreme conciseness of speech to the deepest and hottest pit of Eblis.

All these things made no considerable stir in the little village of Newton Douglas, which was beginning to extend itself under the heights of Penninghame. The borough was proud of its guest, but what the Duke and his henchman desired most of all was to be safely across Cree Bridge and to place a county or two between them and the wrath of Adam Ferris and his brother-in-law Julian Wemyss, whom they held to be answerable for the attack at the White Loch. So as soon as the wounded man could be moved, the best horses to be had in Minnigaff drew the coach gingerly across the bridge and out of immediate danger of pursuit.

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The Duke thought it safest to make as little of the occurrence as possible. He had many debts, and the present loss of his treasures seemed a good chance to get the Government to pay off his creditors. He had, he was willing to swear, been bringing over from Ireland the moneys with which to conclude the arrangement. And now he had lost not only the treasure but his jewels as well, in the discharge of his duty to the King and the Houses of Parliament. What more fitting, therefore, than that the loss should be made good to him, together with some compensation for the wounds he had sustained in the defence of his creditors' property?

During the rest at Carlisle it was agreed that Lord Wargrove, in consultation with Mr. Robert Adam, the Duke's legal adviser and boon companion, should draw up a schedule of his losses—such as might be expected to pass the House of Commons without any of the unpleasant rakings up of the past which usually distinguished these periodical cleanings of the slate.

Only a couple of years had elapsed since the Commons

had been engaged for weeks in the examination of the Duke of York's affair with Mrs. Clarke, and the Duke of Lyonesse felt that he must not allow his application to be handicapped by the account of an attempt at abduction, such as that of which the daughter of Adam Ferris had been the object.

It became highly necessary, therefore, that the mouths of the girl's relatives should be closed, and it seemed to the prince and his advisers that the delicate negociations could better be conducted through Julian Wemyss, who at least could not fail to know the character of his former attaché.

"Besides I know something about *him*," said the Duke, "which will make him think twice before denouncing me."

Lord Wargrove put an eager question. He would have rejoiced to be able to repeat in society the tale of some disgraceful and unpublished scandal attached to the name of the ex-ambassador.

"No, no," said the Duke, promptly, "nothing of that sort. There is nothing against him personally. But he will hold his peace for the sake of a certain great lady. Oh, Wemyss is a man. He quitted his post at Vienna rather than bring a lady's name into a quarrel, in course of which he was challenged. Now ambassadors do not fight duels, so he resigned and killed his man. I was there at the time."

"Ah," said my Lord Wargrove, thoughtfully, "so he is a wine of that vintage, is he? Then we shall probably hear more of the little adventure which went to smash when that old thief's horses blundered into those white gates."

"You do not suppose," cried the Prince, startled into raising himself incautiously on his elbow so that he grimaced with pain, "that it was Wemyss who pursued us?"

"Certainly not," said Wargrove. "If he is the man you describe, he would never have fired a blunderbuss into a dark carriage. He would have stopped the horses and shot us one after the other at twenty paces like a gentleman."

"What, without seconds—that would have been

murder ! " exclaimed the Duke of Lyonesse, who liked well enough running away with pretty maids, but much deprecated the interference of inconvenient relatives afterwards. As, for that matter, did most of the royal princes of that time.

Who did their ill by stealth,
But blushed to find it fame.

" A man who can resign an ambassadorship to pink his man is never in want of a second, specially in his own country. He would have fought us—be sure of that—and so far as I am concerned, the pleasure is only postponed. As for you, your Highness had better get to Windsor or Carlton House, as soon as may be."

" I cannot go to Carlton House," the Duke answered sadly, " though I dare say George would be glad enough to see me. We always had a great deal in common, but all that is of no use. The Fitz does not like me and she is ruling the roost there again."

" Well," said Wargrove, quaintly, " I shall be jotting down the provisions of my last will and testament as we are jogging along southward."

" I wonder," said his Royal Highness pensively, " what has become of the little baggage. She would have been entrancing if we only could have got her safely trapped."

" Well," said my Lord, " you would not listen before, but I tell you now that if you *had* trapped her, as you say, you would certainly have died in bed with a dagger in your throat. That was what she meant by ' Oh, if I only had it ! ' You heard her say that. I remember my cousin Southwald getting hold of an Italian girl—a little minx from Apulia, fine as silk but dusky as a Brazil nut. She fought wild and bitter like a trapped wild cat. It was at Lecce in Murat's time, but Southwald was conceited that he could gentle her. He did not care for what he called the ' full-uddered kine.' He liked them parched and lithe with eyes like smouldering fires— "

"Ah, like Patsy!" said the Duke, not yet cured of his love-sickness.

"Exactly," countered my Lord, "like Miss Patsy to a hair. Well, when we went into his tent the next morning—Murat had excused him service—he—well, he was not pretty to see. To begin with his throat was cut and the girl nowhere to be seen. Yet I could be sworn I tied her wrists tightly enough. One look at Southwald spoilt more breakfasts than mine that day, and Murat himself, who did not stick at trifles, brought all his available officers, a whole camp of them, and made poor Southwald the text for a little discourse. No, Murat did not say anything, he only pointed, but my cousin made a better homily and application than parson ever preached."

"And pray what were either of you doing in Apulia with the brother-in-law of Buonaparte?" cried the Duke, who compounded for the sin of private cowardice by excessive public patriotism.

"You were at Vienna at the time, and ought to remember," said my Lord, quite calmly. "Murat was keen to emancipate himself from the yoke of the Emperor, and was playing for his own hand. Southwald and I had been sent informally from Malta to Naples to discover what lengths he was prepared to go."

"Nonsense, Wargrove, I know better," the Duke exclaimed. "That was not your real reason."

"It was that which was marked on our passports and safe-conducts. But" (here he yawned courteously behind his hand) "perhaps your Highness has remarked that though the Buonapartes are doubtless all great rascals, their female kind have a habit of being deucedly pretty and liberal-minded women!"

"But why then did your cousin mix himself up with little blackamoors?"

"*Chacun à son goût!*" said Wargrove lightly. "I always knew that my taste in women was better than Southie's. So he got what I tell you, and I"—(he fingered at a ribbon), "I got the Order of the Golden Fleece—Murat's own, which

he had brought from Madrid after the Dos de Mayo. Murat was pleased with me. I read the burial service over Southwald out of a prayer-book his mother had written his name in, with Murat and his Frenchmen standing round with bared heads like gentlemen, though they could never have seen a priest before in a Guards' uniform."

"And the girl?" demanded the Duke. "Of course she was sought for and punished?"

Wargrove sighed long and then paused to give his words wing. "Not at all," he said. "I think the general feeling was that Southwald was a fool and deserved what he got. I know that was my own impression!"

"Jove!" cried the Duke, suddenly wroth, "I shall not suffer this, Wargrove. You mean me!"

"That," said Wargrove, with a face like a statue hewn in granite, "is precisely as your Highness pleases."

CHAPTER XIV

THE END OF AN OLD FEUD

SINCE the looting of his house by Laurence's dragoons, Adam Ferris had lived mostly at Abbey Burnfoot, the property of his brother-in-law Julian Wemyss. Julian was not there. He had gone to London upon unknown business. At least if Adam Ferris knew of his kinsman's mission, he would have been the very last man to speak of it.

Nor indeed, did any try to wind the secret out of him. Adam had always been a silent man, distantly smiling and peaceable, but even then there was something about the man which caused his neighbours to be careful how they meddled with him.

But now he brooded darkly, wandering much on the moor and along the shore. Only the old Earl dared to front him, and as there had been enmity between the houses for four hundred years, the first meeting was not without some piquancy.

It happened the first morning after Louis had taken Patsy to Castle Raincy. The old gentleman stood upon the point of etiquette, and though he was stiff with rheumatism, he drilled his shoulders and strode down the glen, crossing by the stile from which he had so often cursed the lands of Cairn Ferris and every soul who dwelt therein. But now that he had called up his men and shut the gates of Castle Raincy upon the heiress of his enemy's house, he passed into Ferris territory as if he carried the white banner of envoy extraordinary.

There was something fresh and almost childish in the delight with which he noted every twist and turn of the long Glen burn, the trouts whisking in the brown pools

or floating with their noses just showing under the shade of rugged willow roots which wind and water had undercut. He had observed these things all his life—from above, but his feet had never been set upon Ferris ground. His eyes had never looked (as it were) upon Zion, and now the goodly things were goodlier, the bunches of Eschol grapes heavier and more purple, the pine trees nobler and higher, the peeps of corn-land more enthralling to the spirit, than ever they had appeared seen from above as if marked on a chart.

Presently he came in sight of the house of Cairn Ferris with its doors and windows wrecked and broken, at the mending of which the joiners of the estate and others from Stranryan were at that moment busy. He passed a heap of broken furniture still huddled together and smoking in a corner, at which he stood still and cursed as if he had been Adam Ferris himself.

He did not love the man nor his family. But Ferris was a gentleman and a neighbour. Only let him get to London. He would make the ears of these Hanover rats lie back when he told them an honest man's opinion of them on some day of great debate. Oh, it was not the first time he had spoken. Hear him they must and hear him they should.

Earl Raincy reached the new house of Abbey Burnfoot in safety. As he came out of the birches of the glen among which the path played hide and seek, he saw the climbing roses and red tropeolum mounting almost to the roof, the full dusky green of the hops twining to the chimney tops and setting a-swing questing tendrils from every balcony. The old man had never before seen such a building, but in an illustrated book of travels he had come across something like it. So his heart expanded when he thought of his own austere baronial keep and the crow-stepped bluestone gables of his ancestors' many additions. The newest of those was four hundred years old, and was only beginning to lose its look of having been finished yesterday.

He shrugged his shoulders at Julian's foreign-appearing palace of pleasure.

"Very well, I dare say," he muttered; "but what will it be after a few hundred winters?"

He did not pause to think what in such circumstances he would be himself. Raincy ground would still uphold Castle Raincy. Raincys would still dwell there, but this little dainty playhouse on the sands of the Abbey Burn would long ago have been swept away by centuries of Solway storms. The thought re-established him in his own esteem, and even the Ferris rule of the coveted Twin Valleys seemed evanescent and fleeting as a cloud on a mountain side beside the invincible eternity of the Raincy dominion.

He knocked at the door and waited. The man who came was Julian's Austrian valet Joseph, courteous, grave, and exquisitely "styled," as was fitting for the house of an ex-ambassador.

"Would his excellency enter? Joseph regretted much that the Earl should not find Mr. Julian. But he had been summoned to London. Yes, certainly, Mr. Adam was somewhere on the beach. He had gone out after breakfast and was still absent. If my Lord would wait, Mr. Adam should be at once informed."

But my Lord greatly preferred to see Mr. Ferris at once, and would walk along the sands till he met with him.

"As his Excellency wills," said Joseph bowing low, and Earl Raincy went his way, tall, whitehaired and slender, to meet Patsy's father. Within tide-mark they met, at the exact point where the Raincy properties join the valley possessions of the Ferrisis. Therefore in the most fitting spot—a true no-man's land, in that the foreshore was the property of the Government, though on the "heuchs" above the butt of the separating march dyke, built with masonry and bound and spiked with iron, testified that the Jews of the hills had no dealings with the Samaritans of the valleys. The lesson, seen close at hand, was a little marred by the fact that Louis and Stair with the assistance of a forehammer had converted certain of the spikes into a

very practicable ladder which either of them, when pressed for time, could take at racing pace.

But from the beach below the barrier seemed of the last truculence and efficacy.

The old Earl took off his three-cornered hat with the gold button on a white rosette at the side. Adam did the same with his more modern broad-brimmed, low-crowned white beaver.

"I have the honour to announce to you," said Earl Raincy, bowing formally, "that your daughter is at my house under the care of my daughter-in-law. My grandson Louis, with I believe, the help of several of your tenants, conveyed her safely back, and I congratulate myself that Louis had the good sense to bring her to Castle Raincy. You will pardon him, I feel sure. He went first to your house of Cairn Ferris, but finding it dismantled, he made up his mind that she could not safely return to Miss Aline's at Ladykirk. So I came off to see you at once, and to say to you how highly I feel myself honoured that one of your name should sojourn under my roof. Time is a great healer, and by gad, sir, if you will permit me to say so, I shall stand by you in this affair, and between us we shall crack the rascals' skulls!"

He held out his hand, which Adam, who had listened sympathetically to the old man's speech, instantly took. Then after one solid grip, they dropped each other's palms with a slight feeling of awkwardness.

"I thank you, my Lord," said Adam Ferris, "I appreciate your coming to me. I knew some time ago by a messenger from Stair Garland that my daughter was safe. I was starting to run down the villains, but my brother-in-law begged that he might be allowed to settle the family quarrel. He was anxious that nothing should appear about my daughter which might hurt her future. Here, of course, in our own country, the poorest and most ignorant would not make any mistake in judgment. But Julian said it would certainly be otherwise in London, especially with those who know the doings of our Royal Dukes. He

begged that in the first instance I should leave the affair to him and if he did not settle matters to my satisfaction, I could then take what action I chose. So, because he knew more of these courtly circles than I shall ever know or desire to know, I bade him go."

"Put that way," said my Lord, "you were quite right. The man was, I understand, a guest in the house of Mr. Wemyss. He sent from there to borrow my horses, damn his impudence. He shall answer to me for that some day. Oh, I forgot—yes, your daughter. But I have been in London and at Court. I have been honoured by the King's commands, but I can only say that this new age—these young men—are rotten to the core. Therefore I agree that for Miss Ferris's sake, the less said the better. When, think you, will your brother be back? I should wish to pay my respects to him as soon as might be!"

"That," said Adam, "I cannot say. I wait any summons from London, but as yet I have heard nothing from Mr. Wemyss."

The earl was silent a while, now tapping imaginary dust from his breeches and again patting his flowered waistcoat to settle the long flaps in their places. He looked away across the shore, pale amber and white at the sandy edge and deep blue beyond. Then frowning with the effort, he spoke.

"Sir," he said, "our young people are wiser than we. My boy brought your girl to Castle Raincy as to a city of refuge, and why should not you and I, sir, copy them? Will you do me the honour to walk to Castle Raincy with me and take dinner? 'Zounds, sir, we ought to have thought of this long before. They put us to shame, these helter-skelter youngsters of ours."

"I accept your invitation, my Lord," said Adam gravely.

"Come now, Ferris," cried the Earl, with characteristic impulsiveness, "we are neighbours and gentlemen—I pray you let there be no 'Lordships' between us. Call me 'Raincy," and be done with it!"

"I fear," said Adam smiling, "that with the best will

in the world it would be difficult for me to get my stubborn Galloway tongue round the word. But I am glad to hear you call me by my name, though I fear me, my Lord, that you must e'en let a thrawn Scots hermit gang his ain gait. If I were to call you ' Raincy ' I should feel like a boy who threw a stone at election time. Why, sir, my father would rise from his grave and floor me with the lid of his coffin ! "

" By Gad, sir," said the Earl, " I believe you are right. That comes of English public schools and all the rest of it. Add to which that small daughter of yours is a witch and will make a man say anything—even a man of my age. But since we are both Galloway men, we may surely call each other by the names of our holdings. If you are ' Cairn Ferris ' to everybody—well, I am ' Castle Raincy '."

" To that I see no objection," said Adam, smiling, " though you wear your rue with a difference ! "

" Eh, what's that ? " cried the Earl, who did not read Shakespeare—" oh, something out of a book—I thought such things were your brother-in-law's perquisite. But I understand—you mean the handle to my name. That is very well for outside use, but never mind handles to-day. Let us be young again to-day. Come and see Patsy ! "

" Patsy ! " that young person's father muttered to himself, " so it has come to Patsy ! Evidently she does not take after me. I have no doubt that the vixen will be calling him ' Raincy ' by the week's end."

CHAPTER XV

THE FECHTIN' FOOL

THESE were hard days for Stair Garland. He alone had planned and carried out the deliverance of Patsy. He had dared the spilling of the blood royal, yet he had given all the profit of it over into the hands of another. And now Louis Raincy had Patsy safe within the walls of his grandfather's castle, and all that remained for Stair was liberty to keep watch and ward outside.

I do not imagine that Louis cared much about the matter. Why should he ? He had other things to think about—bright, young, heart-stirring things that danced and glistened, flitting up before him just as a sudden wind-gust may for a moment turn a petal-strewn garden path all rosy.

But, to make up for such ingrate forgetfulness, Patsy thought a good deal. She knew—no woman could have helped knowing—the fact of Stair's devotion. But then she had always accepted it as quite natural, which it was. Also as calling for no particular notice, except, as it were, for a certain graceful obliviousness on her part, modified by a possessive glance or two from her fearless black eyes—glances for which Stair watched more alertly than he had ever gazed into the night for the signal flashes from the *Good Intent.*

But now he, Stair the doer, was without while Patsy was within with Louis the dreamer. At this time Stair had more liberty to come and go. He could now spend some of his days at Glenanmays helping his brothers and sisters in any emergency. The attack upon the Duke of Lyonesse had been hushed up—so far, that is, as any official inquiry

was concerned. The matter was not even referred to in Parliament.

It had been announced that the Prince had been hurt somewhat seriously in a carriage accident, frequent in travelling through such wild lands as Ireland and the south of Scotland. People averred that he would find himself safer on the Mall or climbing the slopes of Primrose Hill.

And meanwhile McCarthy, the Irish doctor who attended him, said nothing about the gunshot wound in the thigh which caused the Duke to walk with a slight limp ever after.

Stair, of course, knew nothing of this in detail. But he was keenly alive to the results. With the disappearance of McClure the Spy the press-gang work was suspended for a time, and, though a party of light horse lay in Captain Laurence's old quarters at Stranryan, they confined their trips to sending recruiting parties in an above-board way to the fairs and market towns.

At the end of harvest they would doubtless make a good haul among the foolish young men who had been at the southern reaping. These, having spent their cash in Carlisle or Dumfries, would be afraid to face their people at home, and might be expected to take his Majesty's shilling with alacrity.

Without the support of the military, led by so experienced a man as Eben McClure, with local knowledge and connections, the Preventive men displayed no initiative, and seldom ventured far from their barracks on the cliff. They might surround an alehouse in a village with all the pomp and circumstance which shows zeal and is put down to the Supervisor's credit as an efficient officer. But word was always sent before, so that everything dutiable might be removed in the night.

So fearless did the Free Traders become that not a week passed without a successful run at the Waterfoot or in the Mays Bay, and such vessels as the *Star of Hope* from the Texel, and the *William Groot* (everywhere known as the " Billy Goat ") of Flessingue, thought it worth their while

to come to the coast of Wigton with full cargoes of tea, Hollands, brandy, lace, and tobacco.

All this stir in his own business did Stair a great deal of good. It kept him from grieving about Patsy. Besides the constant adventure of the night and the lying up in the Cave of Slains during the day, enabled him to sleep off his weariness and kept him away from the neighbourhood of Castle Raincy.

Sometimes, however, he used to lie out with Whitefoot, hidden deep among the bog-myrtle and small silvery willows. On these occasions he would talk to his dog with such earnestness that Whitefoot used to shake all over with sympathy, whining softly as he laid his shaggy muzzle on his master's knee as if in agony because he was unable to speak.

"Those were better days than this, Whitefoot," said Stair, "when she stood on the bookboard of Peden's Pulpit and we watched her through the broom, before you took the road to fetch sister Jean."

At the words Whitefoot leaped up delightedly and gave his short silent bark. He thought he was to be trusted with another message.

"No, Whitefoot, no," said his master, and the dog's waving tail dropped suddenly. "I know you would go to Jean or even find Patsy through the gates of Castle Raincy, but it would do no good. I am not of her world. I am only the "fechtin' fool." Not that I am complaining, Whitefoot—that is what you and I are for, Whitefoot. We have fought before and may again. But she is not for us, lad—a laird's daughter—what could we do with the like of her if we had her ?—A captain of smugglers and his dog, Whitefoot ! That's what we are. Nothing better ! "

"*Rouch*," said Whitefoot, his brown eyes flashing and his ears cocked. He kept up a little alternate dancing motion on his fore paws, raising his body from the ground without ever ceasing to hold his master's eyes for a moment.

"Oh, I know *you* love me, Whitefoot, but that does not help much just for the minute, lad. We are at the ban of the law, and the coastguards would hang you as gladly as

they would gaol me if they could catch either of us. Only just at present we have the whip hand of them. They have a shrewd suspicion that the hand which filled a Royal Duke with slugs would not be backward in serving them the same. And, particularly to an exciseman, a whole skin is a whole skin."

Whitefoot growled at the word "exciseman," showing a set of firm white teeth under a black bristly lip turned up wickedly at the corners.

"But this will not always last, lad," Stair Garland went on, "the wars will blow over and they will have men and troops to stop all this open cargo-running. Then they will never beat us altogether, and for years and years they will have the upper hand in their turn. What will come of you and me then, Whitefoot? We shall have to foot it, far afield, lad. Fergus will have the farm when my father has done with it. Agnew takes to books and will get learning. But the 'fechtin' fool' must still be the fechtin' fool. And there is no outgate for him except what he can make with his two hands.

"What has he to do with falling in love, Whitefoot?—Answer me that, silly dog, instead of lickin', and slaverin', all over my hand! Can he marry? No. Would he take any woman into this life of straits and hidings and ambushes? No! And yet what a fool he is because Patsy (oh, Whitefoot, our little Patsy!) being a laird's only daughter, goes for a while with her own kind as she must at the last. What a fool you have for a master, Whitefoot! Tell him so!"

"*Ow-oww-ouch!*" The dog's answer came in a kind of furious shout that was at once a defiance of fate, of the dread Power which deprived masters of their heart's desire and dogs of speech, shutting them both in within the narrow bounds of a hard necessity.

Stair soothed the dog with one hand, for he could hear his heart thump in short laboured leaps as if after a long pursuit of a dog-fox on the hill-side.

"It is all no use, Whitefoot," he went on, more gently,

" but after all you are a friend, and it does me good to talk to you. You are always on my side, and I do believe that you understand better than any one else. But now the moon is up we must be going down to the Cave of Slains, or perhaps the Calaman. Stand up, Whitefoot, and say good-night to Patsy before she goes to bed."

Stair rose bareheaded on his rock and looked towards the head of the long bare glen above which he could see the grey towers of Castle Raincy touched to silver by the moonlight. Some windows were still illuminated on the ground-floor, but higher up only one held a light.

Stair waved his hand towards it.

" Come on now," he said, encouragingly to Whitefoot, " Speak—give it tongue ! Say good-night to Patsy. She will never know."

And along with his master's shout there went out towards that single light high on the side of the castle wall, the dog's cry to which Stair had trained him for night signalling. And it came to the ears of Patsy as she leaned from her high window, long and lonely and bleak as the howl of a wolf, outcasted from the pack.

Patsy shuddered and shut down the window.

CHAPTER XVI

A RIDER COMES TO CASTLE RAINCY

One night the two gentlemen sat over their wine in the dining-room at Castle Raincy, the Earl and Adam Ferris of Cairn Ferris, who had now fallen into the habit of coming every day to the Castle either for dinner or supper—dinner being, according to the fashion of the time, at two and supper at eight. Generally Adam came to supper. In this case he saw more of his daughter, and the old Lord found him right good company, thoughtful and well-informed. Besides, what was best of all, Adam was an excellent listener.

So sitting toying with the stem of a wineglass, he heard for the twentieth time the tale of the Earl's early adventure with Gentleman Cornwallis—how they had vied with each other over neckcloths and fair ladies, how they had fought for three hours, as the Earl said "sticking each other here and there" without any great damage, neither able to get home, and finally how they had their wounds dressed by the same doctor before sitting down to ombre, each man with his bowl of gruel at his elbow, how they bet who should drink both bickers, and how it stood on one throw of the dice—how Cornwallis won, and he, Earl Raincy, duly performed his obligation.

Then came how they ordered in a second supply and played who should swallow that. The Gentleman won again, and he, Raincy, was so full of gruel that he had to have four strong footmen to carry him home!

"By gad, sir, so I was—drunk as an owl on gruel, damned slimy apothecaries' gruel. But I was the better of it, sir, and got well in a week, while Cornwallis had rash

and erysipelas and all manner of trouble, because he did not do as his doctor told him ! Served him right, say I ! "

And at this point, without any announcement, Julian Wemyss suddenly stood before them. He was travel-stained and hollow of cheek. He had manifestly ridden far and hard.

" I beg your pardon, Earl Raincy," he said, bowing courteously, " for thus forcing my way into your presence. But it was necessary that I should at once speak to my brother-in-law, Mr. Adam Ferris. They told me he was here, so I came on."

The Earl welcomed him after saying that he had intended to call upon him at the Abbey Burnfoot as soon as he knew that he was home, he added, " You will find the wine good, Mr. Wemyss. I will now leave you to yourselves. By the way, can I send up anything from the kitchen ?—A hungry man, you know, can do no business with a man well dined as I warrant you Cairn Ferris has ! "

But Julian Wemyss begged Lord Raincy to stay. What he had to say concerned him also, or at least his grandson, and all who were interested in Miss Patricia Ferris. As to supper, he had already had something at his own house, where his servant had been instructed to be ready for him.

But he took a glass of wine, and, after draining it, he said, speaking quietly and leaning a little towards the two gentlemen, " I have had the misfortune to kill my Lord Wargrove in a duel on Calais sands."

" Gad," said the Earl, " if it had only been his master ! But so far, so good ! "

" Why did you come back here ? " put in Adam. " Why did you come back from France ? "

" Because in France my work was only half done," Julian spoke gravely. " There was some one in London whom it was my duty to consult. Whatever happened it was necessary to risk a conference with . . . that person. My Lord, (here he turned abruptly upon Earl Raincy) " Adam there is wholly incapable of bringing up Patsy as she ought. She runs the country—with the

adventurous lads who play at smuggling. She comes and goes at her will and not a soul is disquieted about her."

The faint flicker of a smile passed over the cheek of the old Earl.

"Well, Mr. Wemyss," he said, "you have known more women than ever I spoke to—for all my frosty poll—and can you say on your conscience that there was ever a one of them more charming, sweeter, or more ladylike than your niece Miss Patricia?"

"That, my Lord, is not the question," said Julian, smiling also and shaking his head. "Patsy is all you say and more. But if she had been better trained and somewhat more under control, she would never have run like a hare to the Wild of Blairmore, the Duke of Lyonesse would have been spared the charge of buckshot in his haunch, and I should not have had the death of Lord Wargrove on my hands."

"Pooh," said the old Earl, "that is what every man runs the risk of. 'Tis not the first time you have held a foil. Who were your seconds?"

"Mine? Oh, Erskine and the Prince of Thurn and Taxis. I was not particularly keen about Erskine, but he has his relations with the court party and would report that all was done in loyalty on both sides. The other seconds? Why, Watford and Queensberry."

"You certainly gave him every chance," said the Earl, leaning back and considering Julian Wemyss, "they are all of his own kidney except the Prince—and him I do not know."

"Oh, the finest blade in Europe," cried Julian, more enthusiastically than he had yet spoken, "and . . . a Prince of the Empire."

"I see," said Earl Raincy, "between the two of you, you could have accounted for an army of Duke's favourites!"

"Perhaps," said Julian Wemyss, "but to get back to what we were saying, the question is what are we to do with Patsy? I do not mean to spend my whole life in exile, and though we simply could not let Wargrove pass, we

cannot go on fighting duels for the sake of this young woman. Besides, it is bad for Patsy."

"What do you propose, Julian? said Adam, "I see you have come with a plan all ready made up your sleeve. Out with it, man!"

"Well, I have. There is a great lady in London who wishes to take Patsy and treat her as her own daughter—yes, a lady of the court, but not of the Regency court—the Princess Elsa-Frederica of Saxe-Brunswick——"

The Earl's eyes dropped suddenly upon the decanter. He put out his hand, and poured himself a glass. The name was that of one of the King's near relatives, married to the aged reigning prince of Saxe-Brunswick for reasons of State, but now returned to her family and living at Hanover Lodge close to Kew.

The two men at the table instantly found themselves on the verge of matters as it were within the veil. They looked uncomfortable, almost unhappy, as men do on these occasions. Only Julian Wemyss went on with his usual serenity.

"My friend offered to take the responsibility of Patsy off our hands. She is a wise woman and a good woman. There lives no man who dares say different——"

At this point both Adam Ferris and the Earl thought of the man in Vienna who had once dared, and whom the gentle-mannered duellist before them had sent quickly to his own place, with no more time given than to retract his words and receive holy absolution. For in the Austria of that time two gentlemen took a priest as well as a doctor with them to the field of honour. Then Adam Ferris remembered his lonely house below the dark green pines and demanded with a sudden darkening of humour, "And how long is this going to last?"

It was on the tip of Julian's tongue to answer "Till Patsy is married." For indeed that had been his real thought. But he only said "For a year or two, brother—it is better so—she runs the hills like a wild thing. Why, officers of his Majesty have boasted of having met and

talked to her dressed only in yellow sandals and a blue bathing dress ! "

" And, pray, whose fault was that ?" her father demanded.

" Not mine," said Julian calmly, " she ran to save the Glenanmays lads from the press-gang; and if the sandals were mine, she ran better with them than without."

" So have I heard all that," said my Lord. " But if only she were a daughter of mine, I should not send her to London to be made as commonplace and artificial as everything else about the Hanoverian court."

" That, my Lord," said Julian, " is the opinion of a partial grandfather. Pardon me for my freedom, but if that boy Louis had been your son, you would have packed him off to dree his weird in the army. And yet he is a wise enough lad, and has come to no great harm—nay, I know him to be both brave and chivalrous——"

" He is a De Raincy," said his grandfather, rather haughtily.

" And as such should have a career," Julian continued without heeding the expression on my Lord's face.

" I have heard of a man who had the highest prize of the most distinguished of careers right in his grasp, yet one fine day dropped everything to go out in an unstarched linen shirt with another man at six o'clock in the morning ! "

" When Louis de Raincy has my reasons for doing the like," said Julian, looking directly at the Earl, " you can welcome him home and let him watch the trees grow in the park. He will have given his proofs and learned the meaning of life."

" I beg your pardon ! " said Lord Raincy, " I recognise that what you say is true. I am not sure, however, whether I can afford to let Louis go. But perhaps you came back from France to suggest as much to me."

Julian Wemyss laughed for the first time, a clear light-running laugh very pleasant to hear.

" I own I had it in my mind," he said, " all this night-hawking and saving of entrapped damsels is apt to make a boy romantic. Well, no harm for a while, I say. But if

you follow my thought and excuse it—'tis not enough to set up house upon. I have no doubt that your grandson thinks himself over head and ears in love with my niece. What Patsy thinks I do not know—probably that young men were created for that purpose and that one is very like another."

"At his age I should certainly have been most deucedly in love with the lady," said the Earl.

"Just so," quoth Julian. "Now I do not know what plans you have for the future of the lad. I do not know Adam's mind. But even if your ideas happened to agree, which is unlikely—it would be a thousand times better for the young people to see something of life first. Let them have three years apart, meeting other people, getting little electric shocks which will surprise them amazingly, and then if you and Adam agree and the young people continue of a stable mind—why, there will be so much the less danger of their House of Life coming about their ears afterwards!"

. . . . . .

The morning after the three Wise Men had sat in council together in the castle dining-room, Patsy Ferris and Louis Raincy climbed over opposite high walls and dropped almost simultaneously, and as naturally as ripe fruit falls, into the old orchard of Raincy. In the midst of the walled enclosure stood the marble mausoleum of the family, a heavily domed structure, drowned among high trees, through the narrow windows of which tombs and statues could be seen, and more than one De Raincy in his chain mail with his head on a marble pillow, his hands with the finger-tips joined, and a favourite dog at his feet.

The keys of the enclosure were in the Earl's own coffer, and the trees being too old for valuable fruit, the gardeners never went there, except once a year after the falling of the leaves, "to tidy up a bit, because one never knows what may happen," as old Steven the head gardener said. Even then the Earl came, and, sitting on a chair, surveyed their labours jealously, before locking up after them and going in to put away the key in its place for another year.

Patsy and Louis did not greet each other, though they had not met that morning. In the house one said "Good-morning," "I hope you passed a good night," and silly things like that, but not in the green shade of the old orchard. A weeping willow had been turned over in some winter gale many years ago, but had nevertheless managed to go on growing in its new position. It lay like a feathery plume along the side of the Raincy mausoleum. It was not the first time that Louis and Patsy had utilised it as a convenient seat.

The red squirrel who lived in one of the high pines dropped the husks of the larch tassels on which he was fond of browsing, upon their heads. But he did not chatter at them any more. He recognised a not remote kinship with people who had sense enough to come here to be out of the way, and he said as much to his own mate who was lying lazily curled in a big nest high up the bole of the pine which overtopped the white marble roof of the little chapel and looked clear away to sea and back to the towers of Castle Raincy.

"Patsy," said Louis, "they are going to separate us—I am sure of it. That was why your Uncle Julian came all the way from London."

"Well, let them," said Patsy swinging her feet and poking at the grass with a branch she had stripped of willow leaves, "I suppose that even if you are at the castle and I at Cairn Ferris we can always come here or meet at the alder grove—why, there are a thousand places."

"Ah, but," said Louis, "I am to go into the army—and you are to go to London, to be taken care of by some great lady whom your Uncle knows!"

Patsy clapped her hands with sudden pleasure.

"Oh, that must be the Princess—Uncle Ju's princess—then I shall know her. It will be such fun!"

"No doubt—for you," said Louis, bitterly, "but since you are so glad to be away from me and with other people, you will the more easily forget all about me."

"Nonsense," said Patsy, "our people won't lock us in

dungeons and feed us on bread and water. They don't do it now-a-days. And so will you like to go soldiering. Why, haven't you been moaning to me every day for years because your grandfather would not let you go to be an officer and see the world and fight? You owned that it was fun stopping the carriage and getting me out and riding home——"

"Oh, yes," said Louis, "I do not deny it a bit. I own I said so, but even there it was Stair Garland who had most to do with the real business."

"Well, you must own that he played the game pretty straight."

"Umph," growled Louis, "of course. So would any one!"

"Now, Louis," said Patsy, "don't be a hog. You know you have often said that Stair Garland was as good a gentleman as anybody. Of course, he is fond of me——"

"Has he told you?" cried Louis, starting up and glowering with clenched fists.

"What is that to you, sir?" Patsy retorted, biting her upper lip while her black eyes shrank to glittering dots under the long lashes through which she considered the speaker. "Attend to your own business, Louis Raincy. It is no business of yours what Stair Garland has said to me, or what he may say!"

"But it is—it is!" cried Louis, shamelessly, stamping his foot.

Patsy swept her skirts aside and motioned with her hand.

"Sit down, little boy!" she said, "you are not built to sing on that key. I can. Your grandfather could, or Uncle Julian——"

"He has killed a man in a duel—another man, I mean—I heard them telling about it to-day in the stables . . ."

Patsy grew pale.

"Not the prince! . . . He will be outlawed. Perhaps they will send him to prison or cut off his head."

"No, no," Louis broke in; "not the Prince, though that is a pity too. I should liked have a whack at him——"

"Well, never mind—Stair Garland had one, and they say that he will hardly ever walk straight again. But whom has Uncle Ju killed? I knew if he heard of it he would kill somebody. He did once before."

"Lord Wargrove. They fought on the beach at Calais. He came straight over to London to arrange about your going to his Princess, whoever she may be, and he arrived here at the castle while your father and my grandfather were sitting together after dinner spinning stories. He was for your going to London directly. He spoke to grandfather about me, too. Mother says he is a bloodthirsty wretch and no right Christian. But grandfather must have thought a lot of him or he would never have listened to a word about my going for a soldier. Now he has written to the Duke to get me a company, and there will be a lot of money to pay, also, which grandad won't like. I am to go to the *dépôt* immediately to learn the drill and so on. It is a blessing I can ride."

"I don't believe you will be sent to the war at all," said Patsy, "at least not for a while. So don't get cock-a-hoop. You will have a lot to learn, and you can persuade your grandfather, if you really want to see me, to open up his house in London, and then you can come and see me as often as you like."

"What, with a glorified Princess looking after you? I do not see myself, somehow!"

"Oh, you will learn," Patsy retorted carelessly. "Of course we have all got to do that. I don't want very much to leave all this. How should I? It is my country and my life, but I suppose they know best, and at any rate if they keep me too long, I can always run away. You could not do that, of course, when you are a soldier, for that would be desertion, and they would shoot you as they did Admiral Byng."

The bad business of their exodus from the Glens began to wear a brighter aspect for Louis Raincy. London with Patsy partook of the unknown and certainly adventurous. Every young fellow of spirit longs for money in his pocket

to see the world, and at the worst Patsy would be well away from the neighbourhood of Stair Garland.

Then the next moment Louis was ashamed of his thought and strove to make amends.

"I wonder what will become of Stair if you go," he said. "I am afraid he will go the pace wilder than ever, and as like as not get into bad trouble."

"Before I go I shall speak to Stair myself," said Patsy with great determination. "He shot a prince of the blood for my sake, perhaps I can make him keep the peace for the same reason. At least for a while."

At this Louis sulked a little, so little indeed that no one but Patsy could have noticed. But she was down upon him like a hawk on a field mouse.

"See here," said Patsy, "this is no stock-in-trade to start out on. You sulk at the first mention of a man's name. I shall see hundreds in London. You will see as many women. I am only a little country girl staying with a great Princess, while you will be the heir to an earldom, besides having all the prestige of the uniform. Oh, I shall like that part of it myself, I don't deny. But I am not going to have you sulking because I speak to this man or dance with that man, or even tell you that I like one man better than another."

She paused, but Louis did not speak. So Patsy after a long look at him, continued. "I don't know yet whether I love you as you mean, Louis Raincy—or whether I shall ever love any man. Certainly I am not going to cry about you or about anybody. I like you—yes—I like you better than any one I know except Uncle Julian, but not a bit like the lovers in books. So I suppose I am not in love. I would not have you climbing balconies or singing ditties in boats for half this country. I should want to be in bed and asleep. Some day, maybe, I shall love a man, and then I shall love him for take and have and keep. But it has just got to happen, Louis—and if it comes for somebody else, why, I rather think it will be so much the better for you. Come now, it is time to go home. Shake hands,

and be friends—no, sir, nothing else. Wait a good quarter of an hour after I am gone. We don't know what is before either of us, but if you are going to whimper about what we can't help—I am not ! "

She jumped on the first branches of the larch still holding Louis's hand. As she let go she took a handful of his clustering curls and gave a cheerful tug to his head that brought the tears sharply to his eyes.

" Go off and try to fall in love with a dozen of the prettiest girls you can find in London, and if you don't succeed in three years, come back here and we will talk the matter all over again from the beginning."

She was now on the top of the wall. She turned her legs over deftly to the other side with a swirl of her skirts.

" Good-bye, Louis ! " she said waving a brown hand at him as she slid off into the wood. " Some day you will be more of a man than I, and then you will not let a girl put you down."

" Do you know what I think ? " cried the boy, exasperated. " I think that you are a hard-hearted little wretch ! "

But only the sound of Patsy's laughter rippled up mockingly from far down the glade.

CHAPTER XVII

PATSY HELD IN HONOUR

Patsy set out for London with some pomp and circumstance. Quite unwittingly she had made herself a kind of idol in the countryside. The tale had been told of how she had run to warn the Bothy of Blairmore, how she had faced the press-gang that the Glenanmays lads might have time to escape. She had been carried off and rescued. Men had been shot and died for her sake. Louis had taken her to Castle Raincy for safety, and now, girt with a formidable escort, she was setting out to visit London, where it was reported that she should see the King and be the guest of royalty itself.

The old Earl had offered his coach for the journey, and early one September morning he brought Patsy out on his arm, and threw in after her his own driving-coat, made after the fashion of the Four-in-Hand Club—the very "Johnny Onslow" model, with fifteen capes, silk-lined and finished,—lest she should take cold on the way.

"My dear," he said, "fain would I have made you a present of another sort, but your uncle tells me that you are amply supplied with pocket-money, and so you take with you an old man's good will, and would have his blessing, too, if only he thought that of any value!"

Patsy had said good-bye the night before to her Uncle Julian, and had received from him a netted purse which was even then weighing down her pretty beaded reticule. Patsy had not thought that there could be so much money in the world, and she had cried out, "Oh, Uncle Ju, is all this really for me? What in the world shall I ever do with it?"

"You will spend it, my dear," he said smilingly, "that and far more. London is a great place for running away with money! There are so many pretty things to buy."

"Can't I give some of it to Stair Garland and his sister Jean?"

"I have no doubt that you would like to," said her uncle. "Was there ever a Wemyss yet who could be trusted not to throw away money? But it seems as if your Master Stair and I would be a good deal together in the future, and you may safely leave that part of it to me. Stair and Jean shall not lack."

"Uncle Ju," cried Patsy, almost dancing, "are you going to smuggle? What fun!"

"As you say, what fun! Well, there is some smuggling to be done, but I am the contraband goods this time, and I must trust your friend Stair to help me over the sea. He and I are marked down, and we shall both have to run and hide so long as we stay in this country. Even such paladins as he and I cannot go righting the wrongs of distressed maidens without a certain danger, when the ogres and giants are royal Princes and their favourites."

. . . . . .

Thus, on the morning of the twenty-fourth of September, just one hundred years ago, Patsy was handed into the coach by Earl Raincy, who stood back with bared head to see her ride out of the courtyard of the Castle. Her father was on one side, mounted on his big black horse, and Louis Raincy guarded the left flank on "Honeypot." He was to convoy the party as far as Carlisle and then return.

But at the gate of Ladykirk stood a dainty old lady, equipped for journey. Miss Aline was going to London. She was quite shaking with the excitement, and pulled at her openwork mitts with smiling expectancy.

"My dear," she said, "I am coming with you. I think it is more proper. I shall set you down at the house where you propose to stay, and I have taken a room at Ibbetson's Hotel, which is a well-known house, at very reasonable charges, much frequented by the clergy."

" Oh, Miss Aline," cried Patsy, " I am sure you are giving yourself a great deal of trouble. You would be much better at Ladykirk."

" 'Deed then no," said Miss Aline, dropping into the vacant place beside Patsy. " 'Tis the only chance I shall ever have to see London before I die, and I have given Tibbie, the cook, all instructions about the plums and the heather honey. The jam has been a great fret to me this year, and I deserve a bit jaunt. So I will e'en ride in this braw carriage all the road to London, and Eelen Young, the lass that does for me, will bring on my kists by the coach. She is a clever wench, and very likely will be at Ibbetson's before me. At any rate I have nothing with me but this band-box with a night-rail and a change of apparel, such as is suitable for posting-inns. You have, I see, plenty of men-folk to escort you, and, as I jalouse, more to follow—but what you need is a well-born gentlewoman of comfortable means for a duenna ! Oh, ye will try to come round me with your ' Miss Alines,' and your coaxing. But as long as ye are under my care, off to bed ye shall march at a reasonable hour. Then I shall lock the door on ye and keep the key under my pillow. I lost ye once out of Ladykirk when ye slippit out at the back door. But this time ye shall have a better gaoler. Hear ye that, Mistress Patsy ? "

There was nothing to be said, and, indeed, it was a great sacrifice which Miss Aline was making in the upturning of all her cherished habits, and the abandoning of her dear Ladykirk in the season of all others which she preferred—the time, as she expressed it, " of the ingathering of the fruits of the earth."

The " more to follow," by which Miss Aline had intimated an addition to Patsy's escort, was in waiting a little farther on at the head of the Long Wood. Stair Garland and twenty-five of his best horsed and most gallant lads stood waiting to fall in behind the carriage. As Patsy came near she put her head out at the window and cried, " Oh, Stair, is it safe ? "

But Stair only smiled, and took his broad blue bonnet off with a sweep which caused the eagle's plume in it to touch the dust. The twenty-five behind him uncovered also. They made a gallant show, every man with his carbine slung over his shoulder by the broad bandolier strap which crossed his chest, his cloak and provender rolled on the pommel of his saddle, and his bridle and spurs jingling as the ponies fidgeted restlessly in the narrow space.

Then Stair commanded, " File out there," as the carriage rumbled into the shades of the wood and took the direction of the White Loch, and Patsy remembered that other journey and the dreadful uncertainty of it. She shut her eyes and recalled it till she shuddered so that Miss Aline asked if she were cold. She had never lost faith in her friends even then, and now Louis was riding close to the left window of the carriage, and Stair Garland, with his horsemen, guarding her, sending her forth out of her own country as hardly a Princess had ever left Galloway.

They sent the Earl's team back from Dumfries. Stair Garland and his company rode with them over the wild marshes of Solway moss to the Bridge of Gretna, where they formed into two lines, and between them Patsy passed into England. Patsy looked out and kissed her hand to them. They were all sitting still on their wiry little beasts except Stair, who had dismounted, and stood uncovered till the carriage, with its two flanking riders, had passed into the distance. Stair got blown a kiss all to himself, but if he saw it he took no notice, and so was left standing pensive and motionless by the end of Gretna Bridge, the last thing that Patsy could see on Scottish ground, except the top of Criffel wreathed in thin pearly mist of the evening.

Louis, save for the glory of keeping on a little farther than Stair Garland, might very profitably have gone back with the troop of twenty-five. Few would observe too closely the road chosen by such a cavalcade. Supervisors drew back into convenient shelters. Outposts on craggy

summits, after one long look, shut up the reglementary brass three-draw spyglass and sat down with their backs to the road to smoke a pipe. But Louis Raincy was to stay a night at Corby Castle before turning his face homeward again towards his mother and grandfather.

When the time came to part Patsy held out her hand frankly to Louis.

"Thank you for coming so far," she said, "I shall not say good-bye, for we shall soon be meeting in London, and you will be ever so grand in your new uniform. The ladies will dote upon you. I shall tell them all you are coming."

"Patsy," said poor Louis, "you are very cruel to me. You know I shall only care for you in all the world."

"Fudge!" said Patsy irreverently, "you will like every single one of the pretty girls—the really pretty girls, I mean—who admire you, and if you don't know I shall tell you what to say to them."

"Patsy——!"

"Yes, I know, so you think now, but wait till you have had two or three months of being an officer of dragoons and the heir to an earldom—I wager that no Waters of Lethe would make you forget your old comrade Patsy Ferris so completely!"

"Oh, Patsy," groaned Louis, "do not laugh!—You did not use to talk like that in our nest under the big beech. Do not break my heart!"

"Strange to think," mused Patsy, "that it will not even affect his appetite. Louis Raincy, cock your beaver on the side of your head. Cry, 'I don't care a button for you, Patsy Ferris' and ride away without once looking behind, and if you could do that—I verily believe I should run after you. But let me tell you, sir, whimpering never won a woman—at least not one like me!"

She turned and entered the carriage, which started at once on its pleasant journey through the Westmoreland dales towards the south.

Miss Aline was sitting with her handkerchief to her eyes when Patsy sat down beside her.

"Why, what in the world is the matter, dear Miss Aline?" cried Patsy.

"I do think you might have been kinder to him," said the old lady, "I could not bear you to send him away like that."

"All for his good," said Patsy easily. "He has been too long mollied over by his mother, besides getting all his own way from his grandfather. But . . . before I finish I shall make a man of Master Louis!"

"And Stair Garland?" ventured Miss Aline, taking one swift glance sidelong at Patsy's dark, decided face.

"Oh, Stair Garland," said Patsy with emphasis, "he is a man already. As old Dupont, my French governess, used to say, Stair Garland was born with the 'panache.'"

"And what does that mean?"

"Why, that he was born with his hat-plume in the wind and his hand on a sword-hilt. But I am not sure that he has not been born a century or so too late. What a soldier of fortune he would make, what a cavalry leader, what an adventurer—what a lover!"

"But, my dear," said Miss Aline, speaking very softly, "what a very dangerous man to think of marrying!"

Patsy slid her hand under the silken half-mitt of fine lace and stroked the little dry, trembling hand which nestled into hers.

"Little angel, I am not thinking of marrying Stair Garland," she laughed, "rest easy in that dear peaceful soul of yours."

"I am so glad," said Miss Aline, furtively dabbing at her eyes. "Louis, there, is like a boy of my own, and he has always been good and brave. One feels so safe with him——"

"Oh, please don't turn me against the poor lad!" cried Patsy, stuffing her fingers into her ears that she might hear no more of Louis Raincy's praises.

"And the other—that Stair Garland?" Miss Aline continued, with a certain unusual sharpness, "he is so wild. He rides at the head of gangs of smugglers and defies every-

body, even the minister and my Lord Raincy. I am sure that he would be very insusceptible to proper domestic influences. I doubt if even you could tame him."

"I doubt if I should want him tamed!" said Patsy, with the same dark gleam in her eye with which her uncle had gone out upon Calais Sands to kill my Lord Wargrove.

And at this gentle Miss Aline sighed. She did not always understand Patsy.

CHAPTER XVIII

UNCLE JULIAN'S PRINCESS

A BLUE-EYED, placid woman, with abundant fair hair of the sort which hardly ever turns grey, came forward to receive Patsy. The drawing-room of Hanover Lodge was long, and the windows looked on the river. Patsy flitted forward with her usual lightness. She was not in the least intimidated, but only regarded with immense interest the woman who had loved her Uncle Julian and was still his faithful friend.

Patsy had had it in her mind to kiss the hand of the Princess, but she, divining her intention, caught the girl in her arms and pressed her close, kissing her on the cheek and forehead after some foreign fashion.

"You have come from Julian," she murmured, "you are very like him—the daughter of his only sister. I shall love you well!"

"And this is my father!" said Patsy, who as usual took command of the situation, as soon as there was a man anywhere about to be told what to do, "come forward, father!"

But though the laird of Cairn Ferris was only a country gentleman who had seldom left the bounds even of his parish, he was come of good blood and had been well brought up. He kneeled on one knee to kiss her hand, perhaps not with the courtly grace of the ex-ambassador, his brother-in-law, but still with a dignity which was altogether manly.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Ferris of Cairn Ferris," said the Princess Elsa, "I have never seen your beautiful land, but the best and wisest men I have known have belonged

to your nation—the courtliest and truest gentlemen, both with sword and tongue."

She was silent a moment, and both Patsy Ferris and her father understood that she was thinking of Julian Wemyss. Then she added very thoughtfully, "I have spent a great part of my life among men who do not speak the truth to women, and would think themselves shamed if they did. Therefore I have learned how to cherish men of their word, and these I have found among men of your nation."

"I fear me, your Highness," said Adam, smiling darkly, "that I could not give my countrymen so wholesale a certificate for truth-speaking; but I can also promise you that our Patsy will not lower your opinion of her nation in that respect. Rather she speaks before she thinks, this maid, and so gets herself and other people into much trouble."

Adam remained at Hanover Lodge for lunch, a meal which his hostess called breakfast, and which was served in the continental fashion, every dish separate. The well-styled domestics, in their black liveries on which the device of the galloping horse stood out on each side of the collar, moved noiselessly about, seeming to fade away and leave the room empty when there was no need for their presence, and yet to be behind everybody's chair at the right moment. He bethought him of his own honest James and William who often had scarcely time to discard the gardening clogs or lay down the wood-splitting axe in order to pull on their livery coats, and so began to understand that there were degrees of perfection in servitude.

Certainly Patsy would learn many things here, but would she ever come back to be just his own wild, frank, helter-skelter maid? He doubted it. And it was no comfort to him to reflect that it was for that very purpose he was letting her go, that she might be under the care of this great lady. Well, his brother-in-law must know what was best, certainly, and the princess—Julian's princess—appeared to take very well to Patsy. But oh, Cairn Ferris and the Abbey Burnfoot would be lonely places without

her. And the lads who had escorted her like a queen! Clearly it was better that she should not run altogether wild, being what she was and the favour of men so easy to be won. But—it was hard, also, for he was a lonely man. And it was with a very heavy heart that Adam Ferris took leave of his daughter.

No, he would not stay. He was responsible for Patsy's share in the general quiet of the country. In her absence he knew very well that the temptation to break out would be almost too great for Stair Garland and his friends. He would have more influence with them than any one else. Therefore he would betake himself back to Galloway straightway.

To the Princess, who demanded a reason for this haste, he answered, "Madam, I must go back and keep my country quiet. We are, you know, somewhat turbulent in the North."

"You do well," she said gravely, speaking as one accustomed to government. "I hear that there is much lawlessness in your lands, and for that reason I am glad to be able to shelter your daughter. It is very well for men to wield the sword and hold the scales of justice, but a young maid will be safer in Hanover Lodge."

"All the same I am losing one of my best lieutenants—indeed the best," said Patsy's father.

And with that he kissed her and was gone. Patsy watched him as he walked down the avenue towards the river, where he would find a waterman to carry him to town. Adam Ferris had a stoop in his shoulders she never remembered to have noticed before. For the first time it struck her that her father was growing old.

Something caught her in the throat, something dry and hard that swelled but would not break. She could have run after him and told him that she would not stay without him. But the Princess, who had been watching keenly, took her by the hand and, whispering that she had something to say to her, drew her into a little boudoir looking out on a garden, all shaven lawns, artificial ponds, in which stately

swans moved slowly up and down with a barge-like, gallant manner as though they were accustomed to take part in royal processions.

"And now," said the Princess Elsa, drawing Patsy down on a sofa by the window, "let me look at you that I may see what it is that sets all the men agate to be carrying you off, and fighting duels about you. I suppose a woman cannot always tell, just because she is a woman. But I can see that you are vivid with life. You shine like a black pearl——"

Patsy drew in her breath sharply at the word.

"That was what he called me," she said nervously, looking about the room as if she expected her sometime captor to appear.

"He? Who? That wretch of a Lyonesse? Do not trouble your pretty head. He will not come near Hanover Lodge—neither he nor any of his brothers, except perhaps poor Billy."

The Princess did not further embarrass Patsy by prolonging her inspection. She began to talk of Galloway and of the people whom Patsy knew. Nothing loath was Patsy to pour out her soul on such a subject. This was Uncle Julian's princess, and though she seemed older than she had anticipated—fairy princesses should at least always remain slim—she had all the gracefully placid beauty and the exquisite manners she had looked forward to.

Patsy told of Louis Raincy and his grandfather—of Castle Raincy and the four hundred-year-old feud between the Raincys and the Ferrises. She told the story of her rescue, and how Stair had shot the duke, while Louis kept the horses to be ready for the return.

"And what is this Stair Garland?" the princess asked. "The son of a yeoman, and not the eldest son. Ah, I understand—the cadet, the adventurous one. We have some such in our armies, and many more in the Austrian service. Perhaps we will send your Stair to wear the white uniform. It would become him rarely. And which of the two do you like the best?"

The last question was unexpected, but it was not a habit of Patsy's to be embarrassed—at least, not for long.

"Oh," she said crisply, "these are only two—there are others, and so far I have felt no desire to make any choice. I foresee that if the malady takes me, I am more likely to run away with the man than he with me. Uncle Ju says that is the way with our family. I am really more like my mother's people than the Ferrises—so at least every one says."

"Did not your father run away with an earl's daughter from the door of some ballroom?" the Princess asked.

"It was the Edinburgh Assembly rooms, but Uncle Ju says that it was my mother who ran away with him!"

"That," said the Princess, in a low tone, "I can very well believe. So you have yet to fall in love! Well my advice to you is, do not put it off too long, young lady. And when once you have made up your mind, stick to your man though he were a baker's apprentice!"

"You talk just like Uncle Ju, Princess," said Patsy smiling, "only that he wants me to see as much of the world as I can before—taking your advice."

"What does your Uncle say?" the Princess Elsa asked gently, not looking at the girl but beyond her out into the hazily bright garden.

"Well, if you know him, you will remember that it is difficult to separate what he really means from what he only *says*, because he means to tease. But at any rate he warns me not to run off with the first tight-girthed youth with a curly head who tells me he loves me. As if I were likely to! Why, I can hardly remember the time when somebody was not making love to me, and I do not see that it has made very much difference."

"No," mused the Princess, a smile of quiet amusement in her blue eyes, "but you are not at the world's end yet, and now we must go to town and get something wherewithal to fit you out."

"Uncle Ju has given me such a lot of money, Princess," said Patsy, jumping up, "shall I go and bring it? There is

enough to pay for ever so many dresses. If I were to live to be a thousand I don't think I could spend all that!"

"Your Uncle Julian is a wonderful man," said the Princess Elsa, "he has a purse as long and as ready as his sword. And what he gave you was no more than a little pin-money, just to keep in your pocket, so that you would not need to be coming all the time to me for everything that you might want. But he has put a great sum in the bank for me to use for you, and so you need have no care as to your ball and court dresses and all your fineries—except the worry of having them fitted, which I find a very great one indeed."

Then the Princess broke out in a new place.

"And did Julian send you all the way to London without a maid? Surely such a man knew better than that. I shall scold him when I see him, but I suppose it will be a long time before he dare come to London."

"He said that he would first need to make his peace with the Prince Regent, and I don't believe he will do anything in the matter himself."

"Well, he has friends, and we can afford to let the killing of such a man as Lord Wargrove in a loyal duel stand to his credit a little while longer. Yet perhaps we may see him sooner than we expect. Your uncle, child, is at once the most reliable and the most unexpected of men!"

Patsy let this drop. It was clearly a reflection of the princess upon which she was not required to comment. So she went back to the question of travelling without a maid.

"It is true," she said, "that I had no maid—these are rather scarce in Galloway. I only know of Lady Raincy (Louis's mother, that is) who has one, and she is always changing. But the dearest lady in the world came with me—you would love her—Miss Aline Minto of Balmacminto. One day I shall bring her to see you!"

"What is the reason she did not come with you here?" said the Princess.

"Dear lady," said Patsy (the minx had learned her modes of address from her uncle), "she is too shy. No,

she is not at all the type of old maid—she is not an old maid at all. She has a good estate, and I know that Uncle Ju has to go to Ladykirk often to keep at bay suitors for the estate and for Miss Aline's hand."

"Ah, has he, indeed?" said the Princess, at once showing interest; "then I must make haste to see this Miss Aline of Ladykirk—what a pretty name and style. I don't believe I could get my tongue round the title of her estate. And so Julian acts as her protecting angel——"

"Oh," said Patsy calmly, "there is no love-making in it, you understand—they are both too old, of course. But Julian is the handsomest and richest bachelor in our parts, and Miss Aline—well, she is Miss Aline and owner of the Balmacminto estates. So I think she and uncle make—what is it called?—a kind of defensive and offensive alliance. I know Uncle Ju had nearly to fight old Sir Bunny Bunny the other day. He interviewed the old fellow. He had come to propose his son, who is such a donkey that the very village urchins bray after him and pretend to munch thistles!"

"Let us go and see Miss Aline!" said the Princess, and rang the bell. "Where did you say she was living—at a hotel—why did she not go to friends? It is so much more *convenable* for a lady travelling alone!"

"Well," said Patsy, "I think her aunt the countess is away, and I am not sure whether she would wish to put herself under an obligation. Then Lord Raincy is coming to town next week or so to place his grandson in the dragoons, but his house is not opened up yet. Of course, Miss Aline would have gone there. My father wanted to take her back to Ladykirk—it is so safe and peaceful. No soldiers or press-gangs or smugglers ever go there, for Miss Aline is like something sacred—so unable to take care of herself that everybody must look after her!"

"And particularly Julian?" observed the Princess, with a spark in the blue eyes.

"As you say, dear lady," retorted Patsy maliciously, "especially Uncle Julian!"

"Order the carriage!" said the Princess.

CHAPTER XIX

MISS ALINE TAKES COMMAND

"INDEED, mem," said the dainty little lady, as Patsy and the princess were ushered into her tiny sitting-room, "but this is more than kind and far abune my thoughts and deservings. But I wish it had been at Ladykirk that I had been permitted to receive you, and not in this—this pig-stye, that has not been cleansed for a hundred year, and as for dusting—I was just tearing up an auld bit o' body-linen to show the craiturs how a room should be dusted."

"But your maid?" said the Princess, "I know you have brought one. Why not let her do a thing like that?"

"Eelen Young—oh, mem, it's little ye ken—and how should ye, being as they tell me siccan a great leddy, the snares and the traps that lie waiting for the feet of the young and the unwary here in this michty 'caravansy'! My leddy, there's not a decent lass in the place—only men to serve ye and make the beds. 'Thank ye kindly,' says I, 'but I, Aline Minto, shall make my ain.' So after I had let Eelen Young sleep with me one night, I packed her aff wi' the next coach and paid David Colvill, the guard, to look after her to Dumfries, where she has a sister in service."

The Princess had taken an instant fancy, as Patsy knew she would, to the little Dresden china shepherdess of a lady who would never grow older. Everything about her was irresistible—the soft grey ripple of hair about her brow, the shy girlish eyes, the long delicate hand with the fingers which, in spite of their declared readiness to work, trembled a little, and the voice which spoke the Northern speech with such clear-cut gentility, that the words fell on the ear with a certain cool freshness, like the splash of water

in a fountain or the tinkle of a burn flowing over pebbles of whinstone.

"You must come away with us," said the Princess, "I have a great house in the midst of gardens not far from the town, and horses which are greatly in need of exercise—when it pleases you to use them, you will confer a real favour. So let Patsy here help you to make up your trunks, and come back home with us!"

"Oh, do, Miss Aline!" pleaded Patsy, "that will be the very happiest thing I can think of."

"Bide a wee," said the old lady, motioning Patsy to be silent, "I am heartily obligated to your Highness for her maist kind offer, and I will accept it on yae condeetion. Which is, that if ever ye come to Scotland on any errand whatsoever, or have need of a bit nook where ye can forget the warld—the like comes whiles to the greatest—ye will comes straight to me at Ladykirk——"

"I promise," said the Princess, smiling sadly, "I have great need to profit by your offer now. But at present I am not my own. I must wait. Still, I do promise you that if I live I shall use my first freedom by coming to visit you at Ladykirk. Patsy here has been telling me about it. She says it is a Paradise!"

"It's weel enough," said Miss Aline, "naething very grand about it but the garden, and *that* is real famous for the plums and the berries. But I daresay ye will hae plenty goosegogs o' your ain. How far are ye on with your preserving, mem?"

"Dear me," said the Princess, "really, I never thought of asking. But I shall see as soon as we get home. I promise you that you shall have the command of all the idle gardeners at Hanover Lodge if you will only come with me."

"Is your jeely-pan good solid copper or only one of thae nesty French things that need to be lacquered every month?"

"Indeed," said the Princess Elsa, "I ought to know, and I am ashamed not to know, having been (for some time

at least) a German *haus-frau*. But living so long in London and away from my country, has made me shamefully careless. You must teach me, dear Miss Aline, so that I need not be put to shame when I come to see the perfection with which you do everything at Ladykirk ! "

" Hoot, the lass Patsy has been bletherin'," snapped Miss Aline, " things gang nae better at Ladykirk than elsewhere, if I were not for ever at their tails. My heart is fair broken to think o' the cook and Eelen Young makin' a hash of the apple jeely and the damson jam. They are sure to forget the maist needfu' thing of a'—and that's neither more nor less than an extra under-sheet o' good writing-paper, cut to size and weel soakit in whusky. And as for the mistakes they will make in the labelling and dating, it's a sin and a shame to think on't. But at least I can, and shall, go over every single pot as soon as I set foot within the hoose. Then, if I find anything wrang, Guid peety the idle hizzies ! "

In half an hour Miss Aline was speeding westward by the side of the Princess, Patsy, in great delight, sitting opposite to them with her back to the horses. The great lady was charmed with the ingenuous frankness of Miss Aline's comments, and signed to Patsy to let her say all that came into her mind.

In Saint James's Street they crossed the Regent driving out to the park.

" And wha's that frisky body in the frilled sark ? " said Miss Aline, who, like many of her countryfolk of the time, regularly honoured her country by exaggerating its accent and speech in converse with the Southron.

" The Regent ! " said the Princess, returning the royal bow with the very slightest inclination of her head.

" So that's the Regent," said Miss Aline, with a critical glance over her shoulder, " weel, to meet him you would never take him to be mickle mair wickeder than other folk —only sleepier and a dooms deal fatter ! "

Soon the town was left behind, and they had the delight of a drive out to Kew by the riverside before them. Miss Aline was delighted and admitted that, though not, of

course, so beautiful as Ladykirk, England had its points all the same, and that certainly neither the Abbey Burn nor the Mays Water could be compared to the Thames *for size*—though, she added, as she observed the patient wistful array of anglers on the bank, that she greatly doubted if any of these fisherfolk would bring back six dozen of trout as Stair Garland often did on a morning after a spate.

Miss Aline declared herself charmed with Kew and craned her head to see the old king's palace—the " rightful king," as she called the stricken Majesty of Britain. For she was attached to George the Third with a real affection, which dated from her childhood and her mother's teachings. The Regent and the Regency party had no friend in her, so that, for this reason alone, she was a welcome guest at Hanover Lodge.

To the astonished minion who opened the door she held out her hand, saying, " Good-day to you—I kenna your first name, but hoo are the wife and the bairns ? "

The solemn footman stammered that he was an unmarried man, and the Princess laughed heartily.

" I shall remember your lesson in politeness when I come to Ladykirk," she said. " Is it James or Gilbert who opens the door ? "

" That just depends, my leddy," said Miss Aline, " sometimes one is more fit to be seen than another. But either o' them would take it sore to heart if ye did not speer for the health o' his family."

" Indeed, it is a good custom, and much used in Germany, where I come from," said the Princess.

" I'm thinking," said Miss Aline, " that in that country they will show more kindliness and hameliness to the folk that serve them than in this cauld rife England."

" You are wholly right, Miss Aline," the Princess answered, " I remember that when my father made a joke —it was always a good, old, time-honoured favourite—he would look about to see that all the servants were smiling at the jest. They had heard it a hundred times before, but

he always liked to see that they were enjoying it along with the family."

So Miss Aline was installed at Hanover Lodge and, before half a day was over, had wormed her way into the confidence of the housekeeper, had won a right to use the kitchen, had consulted the cook on several recondite subjects and furnished her with a new receipt for elderberry wine, and had taken over the whole matter of the preserving for the year. She had arrived a little late, but the gardener had orders to procure for her from Covent Garden all that her heart desired to boil and sweeten and stir and put up in crocks and jars, till there was a sweet smell all about Hanover Lodge which carried out even to the wherries that went by in mid-stream, causing the rowers to turn their heads and sniff longingly.

CHAPTER XX

LOUIS RAINCY ENDURES HARDNESS

Two months later the two courts, that of the Queen and that of the Regent, were equally aware of the rising of a new star of beauty and wit—a certain Miss Patricia Ferris, for whom, it was whispered, more than one duel had already been fought—a royal prince wounded, and a gallant ex-ambassador driven into exile.

The Princess Elsa, of course, had no dealings with the cotories of Carlton House and the Brighthelmstone Pavilion. But as often as Queen Charlotte held a reception or issued from her darkened palace of Windsor, the Princess brought Patsy from Kew to help her Majesty to entertain.

Once, even, she had been taken by the Princess Elizabeth to visit the King. In the same ground-floor suite of rooms which Charles I had used on his passage from Carisbrook to the scaffold, she found a blind old man sitting alone, and playing quietly on the harpsichord. His beard was long and silvery, and he smiled as he played. He heard their steps and stopped. Then he said, graciously, " Come hither, Eliza—who is your friend ? "

On being told that it was a young Scots lady, a friend of the Princess of Saxe-Hanover-Brunswick, the King laughed a little as was his wont. Then he went on talking rapidly, more to himself than to his visitors.

" There is good sense in Elsa, though she did lead us a dance with her foolish fancy for our ambassador at Vienna—I forget his name. She had the Hapsburg temper too, and would have run off with him if he had given her any encouragement. But he knew what was due to a princess and stood aside, telling her to be a good girl and

marry old Brundschweig. The Emperor of Austria owed him something for that—as well as our people. I only hope that he got his deserts. Eh, what's that you say, Eliza ? "

" Only that this young lady is the niece of Mr. Julian Wemyss," said his daughter.

The old king chuckled a little and patted the girl's unseen head.

" Is she dark or fair ?—What—what ? Dark—and very pretty ! Well, that makes it more necessary that she should be looked after. Ah, I see well that if both the Emperor and I have forgotten to do something for Wemyss, Elsa is repaying him herself. Good-bye, good-bye, I am weary this morning. Bid Elsa come to see me another day. Surely she is staying in the Castle—she at least has not forsaken me like the rest."

" Oh, no," said the Princess Elizabeth, " Elsa and Miss Ferris are here nearly every day helping the Queen. And yesterday they had all the boys from Eton College in love with them. They would not look at us at all. We intend to leave Miss Ferris at home for the future."

They went out, and neither one looked at the other nor spoke of what they had left behind them. But in Patsy's mind ran, repeated over and over the words, " I have seen the King !—I have seen the King ! " And in the darkened chambers behind the closed doors, began again the light tinkle of the harpsichord.

Of all the visitors at Hanover Lodge, the most welcome and the most constant was a certain Eitel, Prince of Altschloss, a young man of many accomplishments, of gentle manners, and, for a Prince of the Empire, of a quite extraordinary modesty.

The Princess Elsa had known him from childhood Indeed, she had been a friend of his mother in the days when both were young and the two of them had something to communicate to each other every day which no one else must hear.

The Prince had come on a visit to his god-mother, and had remained on at the Austrian Embassy, gaining that

diplomatic experience which in later life stood him in such great stead.

To the Prince of Altschloss the two months had been of great moment. They had taught him to be humble and distrustful of himself. Patsy had treated him no better and no worse than any other of her admirers, and the tonic, though doubtless bitter, had been good for the young man's soul.

He had been one of the foremost, though not the most foolish, in the party of the Dukes. But now he had quite left behind the reckless prodigality and imbecility of the Regency clique. He now asserted his independence by frequenting exclusively what was known as the Windsor "Frump Court," in spite of the jeers of his ex-comrades.

He spoke excellent English with a slight foreign accent which was not German, and he used it freely to inform Patsy of his constant and unutterable devotion. Prince Eitel of Altschloss was a tall young man with extremely black eyes, a frank, open face, and the quietest manner in the world. But he had already taken part in half-a-dozen great battles, and had kept his corner of the Empire clear of the predatory bands which followed the march of all Napoleonic armies.

This was the youth who discovered that Patsy, dressed in the fashions of the day, going to operas, balls and race-courses, was the same Patsy who had spoken in the gate with the press-gang at the Bothy of Blairmore. But other things had happened during these months.

For nearly eight weeks the Earl of Raincy's house in Piccadilly had been open, and Lieutenant Louis de Raincy had frequently appeared in his new uniform at Hanover Lodge.

Patsy had been rejoiced to see him, and the Princess had been kind to him in a quiet way, which yet could by no means be called enthusiastic.

"My old playmate," Patsy had said in introducing him to her hostess.

"And my tyrant ever since I can remember," Louis

had added. "I cannot remember ever once being allowed my own way in all the years when we played together."

"There was a family feud," said Patsy, explaining the situation, "that drew us together. Because you see, each was forbidden to the other. So we said, 'A plague on both your houses,' and found out new nests under more remote trees where we could meet and talk without fear of being caught."

This romantic tale of their early friendships did not appear to be quite to the taste of the Princess Elsa, for she turned away and left them to recall the past at their leisure. She had other views for her little friend than to send her back whence she came as the wife of a mere captain of horse, even though he might be the heir to an earldom in the hungry North.

"Louis," said Patsy, as soon as they were alone, "what would you do if I told you that your uniform became you?"

"I know what I should like to do!" retorted the young man.

"Well, what?" Patsy did not shun the danger.

"Kiss you for saying so," said the daring youth.

"See what it is to wear the king's colours even for a week," Patsy murmured reflectively; "it gives even Louis Raincy a more wholesome opinion of himself. I am glad. I cannot quite yield to the suggestion, but I respect you more for having made it. For the present be content with this."

And she gave him her hand to kiss, which he executed without any of the grace which the Prince would have put into the ceremony, and with a grumble that, though small fish were reported better than none, this was a very meagre spratling indeed.

"Think," said Patsy, mischievously, "what a change since our last afternoon in the Nest under the beech-tree. That very hand which you kissed so unwillingly just now, boxed the ears of this officer of his Majesty's Blue Dragoons."

"I prefer the old style even if my ears were boxed,"

said Louis. "I wish you had never gone away and that I had followed my grandfather's advice and stayed beside you."

"Nonsense," said Patsy, "you will change your mind very shortly. How many girls have you fallen in love with already? I hear you go to the Regent's entertainments. Well, you will find there sweetmeats for all tastes, some perhaps a little spoilt by keeping!"

"You know very well, Patsy, that I shall never care about any other girl than yourself. I never have and I never shall!"

"I bet you six pairs of Limerick gloves that you will not be able to say as much for yourself in six months," cried Patsy.

"Done with you, Patsy," said Louis, "and you may as well pay now, for I am not going to change my mind."

"That I shall wait and see. But beware, I shall have the best of information. We are not of the Duke's party, and do not go to their entertainments, but we hear all that goes on nevertheless."

"I only go because of my service," said Louis, somewhat dishonestly; "the Duke of York, who is once more Commander-in-Chief, has put me on his staff."

"Ah," said Patsy, unkindly, "like master, like man! It is a good proverb."

"Patsy," mourned Louis, leaning forward with his head between his hands in a very unmartial manner, "you know better than that. You forget the White Loch and our ride home to Castle Raincy. You went with me because you trusted me. You took my word about my grandfather liking you to come to him for safety, and now you—you treat me as if I were a child."

"A child—why so you are—a dear, nice boy, and I love you, and see, I will pat you on the head!"

The officer of his Majesty instantly put himself into such a boyish posture of defence that Patsy laughed.

"So you don't want to be patted on the head—well, then, it shan't! But all the same I have not forgotten—

neither what you did, nor what was done for us both by your comrade of the White Water—by the way, have you heard from him lately ? "

" Not I," said Louis, almost fiercely, " but I make no doubt that you have ! You would not offer to pat Stair Garland on the head ? He is a man, you know—you said it yourself."

" Louis," said Patsy, " you are not acting up to your uniform. I have no conventions with you, and you have no claim to know with whom it may please me to correspond——"

Louis rose to his feet with a very pale face, but before he had time to put his anger into words, a servant announced—

" His Highness, the Prince of Altschloss ! "

Patsy advanced, smiling and held out her hand. She seemed to walk right through poor Louis, who felt himself terribly belittled and ill-used. The Prince did all the things naturally and gracefully, which Louis had so blundered over. He gratified the young dragoon with the slightest bow and the longest stare. After which he immediately turned his attention to Patsy, who, on her side—the shameless minx !—seemed to like nothing better than meeting him half-way.

Louis Raincy grew more and more exasperated. He could not stay, yet if he took himself off in any undignified manner, he felt acutely that they would certainly laugh at him. He wished that he could challenge that prince and all such insolent foreigners—yes, and kill them one by one like a second Julian Wemyss ! This thought cheered him, and he had reached his fifth or sixth homicide when Patsy recalled him to himself.

" Miss Aline is in her parlour, Louis. Will you go through the conservatory and tell her that the Prince is here ? "

" She wants to be rid of me," the mind of Louis Raincy went storming on to itself, " she is a hard-hearted, deceitful——"

But while he was thus inwardly detailing the character of Patsy to ease his anger, he was also by force of habit obeying her orders.

He found Miss Aline with a letter in her hand and a flush of excitement on her face, which the young man was too occupied with his own affairs to seek to trace to its cause.

"Why, Louis Raincy," cried the old lady, "is it officer's manners to come headfirst into a leddy's room like a bullock breaking dykes? I have seen you do better than that before ever you put on the king's coat."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Aline," said the boy penitently. "I did not know that the door would open so quickly or that you would be so near. I have a message—from Pat—from Miss Ferris——"

"Eh?" cried the old lady, cramming the letter into her pocket; "wha's Miss Ferris?—I dinna ken her—and I thought that you didna either!"

"Well then," said Louis, withdrawing into his sulks, "she bade me tell you that the Prince is with her and will be glad to see you!"

"Oh, he will, will he noo'," quoth Miss Aline; "weel, there's a heap o' princes. I hae been meeting them rayther thick thae last twa-three months. And this yin can juist wait."

"But, Miss Aline, I think—it will be better for you to go at once—I am not going back to—to be insulted and treated like a child. I want to go, Miss Aline."

The old lady held up her hands from which the deep lace sleeves hung gracefully, while the half-mitts clung to the narrow wrists.

"Hoots—hoots, laddie! What's a' this? Ye hae been quarrelling with Patsy. For shame, Louis—eh, what's that? My puir lad, dinna tak' things to heart. She's a guid lass—what should ony body ken aboot her that I do not ken? Laddie, stoop greetin'—Patsy would be terrible angry if she kenned I telled ye—but she wants ye to be a strong man—'a leader and not a follower.'

Says she, 'I shall never care for a man that I can maister.'"

"Then she will never care for me," mourned poor Louis. "I can do things for her sake—I can do as she bids me, and I am always ready. But, Miss Aline, it does not seem to be the least good. That prince——"

"Never ye mind aboot princes—they are kittle-cattle, and Patsy was juist letting you see that ye should carry a speerit in ye that no prince in ony land could daunt."

"Oh, if it were only fighting," said Louis, "I should not be afraid. But as it is, I shall not set my foot here again till Patsy sends for me——"

"Which she is like to do the morn's mornin', just to see if ye are still in the sulks! Laddie, can ye no see that it is just an amusement to her. She doesna mean to be cruel, but only wants ye to be a man amang men—and mair parteeclar amang weemen!"

"Yes, I know," said Louis, disconsolately, "she does it for my good. She has explained that to me several times. But somehow it does not seem to help much!"

"Louis Raincy," said the old lady, severe for the first time, "be a worthy son of your forebears. There are forty of them in the Raincy chapel up yonder in the wood. It wad be an awesome thing to be carried in among them and you not worthy. I am a woman—an auld maid if you like—but I am a Minto, and here I am braving the great ones of the earth to look after Patsy—me that would a thousand times raither be at Ladykirk with Eelen Young and that silly Babby Latheron, weighing out the sugar and spices for the late conserves—the bramble and the damsons and the elderberry wine."

In spite of all this good advice, or perhaps because of it, Louis Raincy went off without returning to the drawing-room, and with what he took to be despair in his heart. Patsy was by no means the old Patsy. She would never be again. Yet when he began to turn matters over in his head after he had reached his quarters, he could not remember a time when Patsy had not tyrannised over

him, trampled him under foot, and variously abused him, even from the time of their infantile plays with sand castles and sea-shells built, architected, and ornamented, on the seashore between the Black Head and the estuary of the Mays Water.

But somehow when Patsy did the same thing in London, and in the face of other men, Louis did not enjoy the process so much.

"Hech, my daisy," said Miss Aline, as she and Patsy went back to her parlour after the Prince of Altschloss had taken his leave, "that laddie, Louis, has ower muckle o' his mither in him. She's a McBride, and guid blood, but Dame Lucy is juist like some preserves. Ye put in good berries. Ye strain to perfection. The sugar and the spice and the correct time for boiling—skimming and stirring done with your own hand—yet after all the stuff will not jell. It will harden in no mould because it is unstable as water. That is the boy's mother, the Lady Lucy. As for the lad, God send him something that will harden him, so that when his grandfather dies, another De Raincy of the right breed may rule in his stead. At present he is overly much after the pattern of his mother!"

"Well," said Patsy, with her hands rolled in the fluffy ends of her muslin scarf, "don't blame me, Miss Aline. I do my best to toughen him, and then he goes and cries to you!"

"I wonder, dear," said the old lady, after a silence which lasted quite five minutes, "if you could not try giving him a good conceit of himself. My father used to say that if ye tell a dog all the time that he is a worthless puppy and will never be good for anything, he will herd the sheep but poorly on the hill."

CHAPTER XXI

THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

NIGHT by night the mists came up from the sea. Morning by morning the gusts from the hills blew them back again. Winter began to settle on the rugged confines of the moors, and still Julian Wemyss stayed on with Stair Garland at the Bothy on the Wild of Blairmore. First, because it agreed with the mystery-loving side of his nature, and also because, so long as the weight of Napoleon's rule pressed upon Europe, he did not know where he could be safer. At Vienna, perhaps, but so long as the Princess Elsa remained at Hanover Lodge, he could not bring himself to make the long and circuitous journey by Gibraltar and Trieste.

And, indeed, he was in no great hurry to move. He had been outlawed for failing to appear even as he had expected, to answer for the killing of Lord Wargrove. Also he knew that the wounding of the Duke of Lyonesse had been laid to his charge. The word which had gone forth that his capture would be grateful to the Regency and its camarilla of Dukes, would naturally sharpen the pursuit.

Fresh bodies of cavalry were still occasionally drafted from Glasgow and Carlisle to override the moors. But the lack of any local intelligencer of the calibre of Eben McClure, the natural secretiveness of the people as to "lads among the heather" and all folk in trouble, caused the search to be spun out so long, that the general opinion was that Julian Wemyss had escaped in an emigrant ship to America.

Stair occasionally showed himself at Glenanmays, and

even made bold to walk in the High Street of Cairnryan on a fair-day, none daring to meddle with him, and the very officers of local justice turning aside for a dram at the sight first of him. He was believed never to move without such a bodyguard as could cut its way through a squadron.

He was thus enabled to go about apparently alone, disquieted by none, for the people were on his side, and it would have proved a dear bargain to any man who had "sold" him. Stair made these appearances as often as he knew that the soldiers were off on an expedition in a safe direction. His object was to draw away attention from the Wild of Blairmore, and to give the people of Cairnryan the idea that he was lying up in the immediate neighbourhood of their town.

Meanwhile he and Julian Wemyss had added greatly to the comfort of the Bothy. A solid rampart of turf, doubled on the western side, protected it against the fierce winds of the moors. The whole of one end was filled with an abundant stock of firewood and peat which his brothers had cut, cast and prepared, and the troop had brought in one night of full moon. The peat-cutting had increased the difficulty of reaching the central fastness of the Wild, for the ink-black tarns had been cunningly united, and the wide morass in front, where from black pools great bubbles for ever rose and lazily burst, had been dammed till it overflowed the meadows and lapped the sand-dunes behind the house of Abbey Burnfoot. Of course a pathway was left, indeed more than one, to provide a way of escape if the Bothy should happen to be blockaded. For all which reasons Julian Wemyss was exceedingly content to abide on this little platform of hard turf mixed with sea-shells, with the misty water-logged bog all about.

He had many books, for his own house was not so far off, and his good Joseph remained in charge of everything at Abbey Burnfoot. On dark nights at the edge of the Wild, Joseph met Stair always with a large parcel of provender and a small parcel of books.

Joseph was in great trouble because he had not been allowed to accompany his master to his hiding-place, but he retained his self-respect and kept himself so fine that his black court-dress and immaculate white cravat made a blur before Stair's eyes in the upward phosphorescent shining of the sea.

"The master sent no message by you, sir?" he would inquire, always with a wistful hope that "His Excellency" might relent.

"You will find all that he wishes you to do set down in that letter," Stair would say, handing the document over.

"But—he said nothing about my coming to him?"

"Not a word, Joseph!" Stair would answer, as carelessly as might be.

"Then who looks after Mr. Julian? Who lays out his shirts and sees to his studs? Oh, Mr. Stair, that it should come to this! Sometimes I cannot sleep for thinking of it!"

"Mr. Julian looks after himself," said Stair, brusquely; "at present he is wearing one of my grey woollen shirts, and I have not heard him complain. Go home, Joseph, and look after the house. Keep the doors locked, the guns loaded, and the dogs loose. Mr. Julian was never better in his life!"

After this Joseph complained less, and probably slept better. It had always been in his mind that perhaps this unknown Stair Garland might supplant him in the personal service of his master. But when once he understood that Stair was of a breed so extraordinary that he recognised no difference in rank between himself and his guest, that instead of proffering service, he exacted that Mr. Julian should do his fair share of the work, and finally, that many of the books he carried were designed for the enlightenment of Stair Garland, whom his master had taken as a pupil, he ceased to be jealous and became again merely serviceable.

Stair had his full share of the local thirst for knowledge, and the determination to get it in one way or another.

So with the self-assertion without which a Scot ceases to be a Scot, he had fastened upon those winter months with Julian Wemyss to fill in the lacunes of Dominie McAll's instruction. A good deal of classics, daily readings in the French and German tongues, conversation after the Socratic method—these were the pillars of Stair's temple of learning at the Bothy. And because the root of the matter had always been in him—which is the determination to excel—he progressed with a rapidity that astounded his teacher.

Every morning Julian Wemyss said to himself, "It is impossible that he can have remembered and assimilated all that we went over yesterday!" But once the breakfast-things cleared away, he found Stair as sharp-set as a terrier at a rat-hole as it were, nosing after knowledge. Nothing seemed to come wrong to him, and if he did not understand anything, an apt question set him right, and when Stair flung up his head, his eye misty and his intelligence withdrawn, Julian Wemyss stopped also, because he understood.

"He is filing that away where he can find it!" he thought to himself. And far into the night he could see reflected on the roof a faint glimmer from Stair's dark-lantern. His curiosity was aroused, and he looked into the gloomy kitchen with the heaped peats filling all the space even to the roof. There, with his feet to the smouldering fire of red ashes, lay Stair Garland, his notebooks in front of him and a volume propped against an upturned pot, threshing his way pioneer-wise through the work of the next day. Julian Wemyss went softly back to bed, but did not sleep for a long while.

"If that fellow fights for the Emperor," he said to himself, "he will do it with his head. Yet they call him the 'fechtin' fool' in these parts. The boy has never had a chance, that is all. His ambition and facility have given him the leading-place among these smugglers and defiers of the press-gang, because no other career opened itself to him. We shall see when the *Good Intent* comes in the

spring. In the meanwhile, never tutor had such a pupil!"

Yet more marvellous were the weeks as they went past for Stair Garland. Every morning he woke fresh to the romantic adventure of books. His eyes flashed down marvellous pages, taking in their gist, and then he settled himself with a happy sigh to analyse line upon line, to warehouse precept upon precept.

Yet he did not leave any of his outside duties unattended to. He knew of every change made in the garrison at Stranryan. Fergus and Agnew came nightly to the verge of the Wild. He met with Jean at the alder copse. His father talked with him standing upon Peden's Stone, and (as he said) "tairged him tightly" for his occasional neglect in reading the Bible, which was the root of all things of good report in this world as well as in the next.

To which Julian Wemyss added that it was also the foundation of good manners and good style. For all which reasons and also because of the reverence natural to his people, Stair Garland read a good deal in the Bible, and it was the only book concerning which he asked no enlightenment from his master, Julian Wemyss.

Stair heard extracts from the letters from London which Patsy sent to her father and uncle under the frank of the Earl Raincy, but he had one or two altogether his own, and these he judged more precious than gold. They came to him by way of his sister Jean, and the trysting-place in the alder copse by the side of the Mays Water.

On such occasions, Stair, being in furious haste, took the bundle of clean clothes Jean had brought him, and strode away over the rough fells in the direction of the Wild. Half-way, however, he changed his course. And many a night wanderer on land and many a benighted fisherman bearing up Loch Ryan-ward on the northward set of the tide, was awed by a strange light in the Corpse Yard above the Elrich Strand, where the Blackshore folk bury the drowned who come to them from the sea. Here among the wooden head-boards (bearing dates only) of

the unknown dead, Stair Garland read his first letter from Patsy in London.

"Stair," (it began without qualitative either formal or affectionate), "I did not promise to write to you, so I am doing it. London is very full of gay things which are not so gay as they look. I would rather see you and Whitefoot (give him a kiss from me !) than the procession of the Regent to open Parliament.

"The Princess would spoil me were I spoilable. But you know I am made of the guinea gold that does not need gilding. However, she does her best. I have a maid to wait on me, but I think I do very much more for her. Still, she mends the holes that I dance in the heels of my stockings—all of silk, Stair, and smuggled from France ! For they 'run' things here, just as they do in Galloway—in Sussex and Cornwall mainly. They have only luggers, however—at least so one of my partners told me last night. He had seen John Carter himself down at Prussia Cove ! Think of that, Stair ! And the old man had preached him a sermon !

"I have dresses in Valenceens lace over pale-blue silk, and all sorts of lovely things; don't you wish you could see me ? I see Louis often, but not so often as I used to. They say he is in love with Mrs. Arlington, a great beauty at the Regent's court. You know that Louis is now aide-de-camp to the Duke of York, who is Commander-in-Chief, so his chief duty is to draw up ball programmes and write dinner invitations, which I have no doubt he does in a very warlike manner.

"When he remembers he comes round to tell me that he loves me still. But, alas ! he mostly forgets. Whitefoot is more faithful than that, eh, Stair ? I could wager that at the moment you are reading this nonsense, he is sitting with his head on your knees, looking up in your face."

(Stair put down his hand from the edge of the paper and touched the rough head, and at the caress Whitefoot

whined joyously, as he did in church when the congregation sang "Coleshill.")

"Stair" (the letter went on), "I hold the Princess and you responsible for Uncle Julian. I hear from him sometimes and he tells me that you are getting to be a wonderful scholar. Well, playing with your books will pass the time for both of you, and keep you from thinking too much about me. As to my welfare, do not pine away with worrying about that. I, Patricia Wemyss Ferris, swear on the old oath, that I am fat and fair to see. I find that I can answer the fool according to his folly, and leave wherewithal to talk on terms of some equality with the few poor lost and forwandered wise men whom one meets in these parts. The dear old king with his David-and-Solomon beard, is really the most sensible person I have yet talked with. So they shut him up, take his crown from him, and say that he is mad.

"The Wise Young People who bear rule, drink each other under the table, race to Brighthelmstone, killing half-a-dozen children by the way, and ruin themselves at play during the night. Altogether it is a fine place, this London, and if you were here you might very well say, with the witty Frenchman, 'The more I see of human beings, the more I love my dog!'

"But you must not tell all this to Uncle Julian. I am learning fast—though perhaps not quite what he expected me to learn. His Princess is most kind to me, and, indeed, so is everybody. There is a Prince, a rosy young man who walks delicately like a cat on wet grass, and they say that he would like to lay his Princedom at my feet. Which do you think I would rather be, Stair, a Princess with her chin in the air (Ho! Menial, fetch me my crown. No, the one in the left-hand drawer, most ignorant of varlets! Now I pose it on my princessly locks! So!), or just Patsy Ferris, in blue gown and yellow sandals, very much out of breath, washing the dishes in the Bothy of the Wild of Blairmore?

"Tell me which you think I should like best. I deliver

this subject to your meditations. You are not to show my letter to Jean nor allow her to read a single word of hers to you. If you do, I shall hold you for ever faithless and mansworn !

" Your obedient, faithful scullery-maid *or* princess,

" PATSY."

CHAPTER XXII

WINTER AFTERNOON

THE winter was lying heavy and sore on the Wild of Blairmore. The storms from the North-west brought down the scouring snow, and even to go to the edge of the sand-dunes to meet Joseph was an undertaking. Only by continual endeavours with the great iron ' gellick ' was the well kept from freezing. The frost had long ago laid hands upon the inky ponds and morasses and bound them as it had been with solid iron.

. . . . . .

But at Hanover Lodge the fires glowed warm in open grates. The rich, solid, early Georgian furniture gave back reflections ripe and fruity, and the brass fenders shone in the flicker of the firelight. The Princess used sea-coal fires, to which, as a daughter of the land of pines, she added split and well-dried logs of resinous wood. These she would arrange with her own hands after the Bohemian fashion, pausing often to tell her guest tales of the times when at the convent, she and Marie Louise had stolen from the Mother Superior's woodpile to keep from freezing.

Patsy knitted diligently and before her a book lay open, but she read little. For the Princess, recalling old things and speaking copiously, looked often at her for sympathy and understanding. Miss Aline had gone to lie down with a book, so the two younger ladies were alone, and, as it seemed little likely that any visitors would venture so far from home that day they had settled themselves in the comfort of the Princess's boudoir, content with each other and content with the weather. Patsy had been teaching

her companion such phrases as "a blatter o' sleet," an "on-ding o' snaw," and a "thresh o' rain."

The Princess had a peculiar pleasure in learning such things and would often subtly misapply them in order to be corrected. She would tempt Patsy into further descriptions of the Twin Valleys, the Bay of the Abbey Burn, the bold deeds of the smugglers, and the fights of the Free Bands against the press-gangs. But always, by all roads and bypaths, she would bring her back to the Bothy of the Wild of Blairmore. Was she sure that there was the possibility of any decent comfort in such a place at such a season?

Patsy shut her eyes, visualised the Wild as she had often seen it when she made a short cut from her Uncle Julian's to the sheltered valley of the Mays Water. More than once when the lads were in hiding after some offence against the revenue laws, which had brought troops into the district, Jean and she had been guided by Stair to the fastness, where they had been royally entertained, before being convoyed each to her home by the genial outlaws.

She spoke of the wild white moor, cut with deep hags, the arms of the "scroggie" thorns blown away from the sea and clawing at the ground like spectral hands, black beneath, but every gnarled knuckle and digit outlined in purest white above. Sometimes the clean tablecloth of white which covered a little loch, was cut by a round black "well-eye" through which a spring oozed oilily, refusing to freeze.

These must be known and avoided, for the ice was always thin thereabouts and a heedless night-wanderer might very easily vanish, never to be heard of more.

Then there was the Bothy. Little could be seen of that. Gone the summer creepers which had made it a bower. It crouched low, almost level with the snowladen tops of the heather bushes, which grew high about, hidden and banked behind immense masses of sods, all now covered with the uniform mantle of the snow. Great wreaths formed in the first swirl of the storms had piled themselves up so as to overhang the low chimney. You might pass

it a score of times, and if you missed the faint blue reek stealing up along the side of the precipitous Knock Hill, you would see nothing of it, nor so much as suspect that there was a habitation of living men within miles.

As Patsy talked the Princess had gradually been leaning further and further forward, her lips parted, and shuddering a little as the wind lashed the snow against the great windows of Hanover Lodge.

"Oh," she said at length, as if to herself, "to think of him there in that terrible place and of us here. It makes me hate all this comfort. Are you not ashamed, Patsy?"

Patsy the frank had some difficulty in repressing the ungrateful speech which came to her lips but did not pass them. "I would rather be with them than with you!" But she refrained and entered into new explanations. The Princess had heard the most part before, but she never wearied of being reassured.

"Now, listen! Uncle Ju is with Stair Garland. No one will hurt him for that reason. In our country Stair Garland has more real power than the Lord Lieutenant or even my father. No, he is no ignorant peasant. I do not think he could dance so well, but he could talk better than any of the partners who fall to my lot at the court balls. The Bothy on the Wild? Well, I will try and tell you. It is certainly dark inside, but on the side opposite to the wind a little window is always kept open, and on the table where they read, write, and take their meals a lamp will certainly be lit. Uncle Ju will be stretched on the long couch among the pillows, reading. That is where Stair sleeps at night. His feet are towards the fire and the light shines down on his book from the four little panes of glass. These are open to the sky but carefully masked from the sight of any passer-by (if such a thing could be thought of on the Wild of Blairmore) by a firmly packed wall of snow.

"Stair moves about getting ready the next meal, and as like as not he calls on Uncle Ju to take his turn at scouring the pans or peeling the potatoes."

At this flight of imagination the Princess suppressed a cry of indignation.

"Oh, that is nothing," Patsy went on, unsympathetically, "of course he is glad to do it. It is good wholesome exercise and helps to pass the time, though digging themselves out in the morning when the drift is over the chimney top is better, besides the making of little paths to the outside peatstack and——"

"But your uncle—an ambassador—a favourite at courts—not a court like our dear Sleepy Hollow there at Windsor or the Rout of Circe at Carlton House, but the Court of the Hapsburgs, the Court of Austria—to think of Julian Wemyss there for your sake!—Why, Patsy, though I love you dearly, I declare that you are hardly worth it!"

"Well, Stair Garland is there also," Patsy retorted, instantly, "and just as much for my sake as Uncle Ju. And now the Duke has got his debts paid, in far greater danger, for Uncle Ju would get off with a year in prison, but Stair they would hang for those slugs in the Prince's thigh, which, thank Heaven, they can't dig out!"

"But your Stair Garland is accustomed to such a life, while my poor Julian——"

"Princess," said Patsy seriously, "take my word for it, Uncle Julian has not had the manhood all taken out of him by his life at courts. Even now who can cross swords with him? Besides, I have heard him say that if he were a year or two younger he would be out on the bleak Pyrenees with the other gallant gentlemen, his friends, driving Soult and his Frenchmen back out of Spain. And compared to what our army has to suffer lying out on these frozen rocks—why, the Bothy of Blairmore is a palace!"

The Princess was silent but not convinced. She knew that of course Julian Wemyss was brave, but she felt that it was one thing to stand up to your enemy and kill him like a gentleman, and another to hide among frozen hags and sleep under a roof of snow.

Nevertheless she brought away a certain sense of physical warmth and well-being from the description which Patsy

had given her, which comforted her. It was pleasant in the Bothy of Blairmore. Men had a strain in their blood, something primitive and savage, which made them like such things, at least for a time and as a change. She remembered her father saying that he was never happier than in the corner of a forest clearing waiting for the wild boar to charge, a flask of white brandy in his pocket and a forest-guard with a couple of spare rifles at his back.

At that moment the door opened softly and, with her smelling bottle in her hand, Miss Aline came in. She went to the window where a furious rush of snow driven by the Channel wind saluted her. She sniffed appreciatively as the hasps rattled, for even through the well-fitting windows the snell bite of the winter storm entered.

"Eh, but that's hamelike," she said, going closer, "it will be brave weather on Solwayside the noo. I mind when it would hae driven me out to play amang the wreaths like a daft year-auld collie—. Aye, and I am no sure that I wad not like a turn the noo—not o' that saft stuff that will melt and be gane the morn's mornin', but the fine kind that sifts up your sleeve and down your neck!—But for the puir herds on the hill, waes me, it will be a wakerife time for them. Little sleep will they get if the snaw begins to drift in the hollows!"

Patsy looked at the Princess mischievously.

"You see, dear lady," she said, "our Miss Aline knows of worse places than the Bothy of Blairmore, even in such weather."

"But I do not understand," said the Princess, "Julian never told me anything of this. Do the sheep in your country stay out in all weathers—even in the winter storms, and are men to be hired who will look after them?"

"'Deed there are," said Miss Aline, "and what for no'? A finer, buirdlier set o' lads than the herds of the Hills neither you nor me are likely to see. And as for storms and biding oot at nicht—there's Willie McKerlie that herded the Lagganmore for forty year, and in the Saxteen Drifty days he wasna hame for a week. And when he got all his sheep

oot, they asked him how it came that he wasna dead. "Deid! Deid!' says he, 'what for should I be deid? I juist hadna time, man. But I grant ye, I was mair nor a wee thocht hungry, and I never kenned afore what a heap o' crumbs a man carried in his pooches when they are a' turned oot!'"

CHAPTER XXIII

PATSY HAS GREATNESS THRUST UPON HER

At Hanover Lodge, in spite of the good will of the princess, all did not go smoothly. Every day the ladies drove out in one of the royal carriages drawn by four beautiful bays, but with the servants and outriders in the black liveries of Saxe-Brunswick.

On such occasions the Princess dressed plainly, as befitting her position of exile, but it pleased her to array Patsy with a taste seldom seen in England. On days when they went to Windsor, where the Princesses made a pet of her, Patsy wore a dress of white muslin, simple enough, but trimmed with point lace, Vandyked at the edges, and on her head a most charming Leghorn gipsy hat, with wreaths of small roses round the edge of the brim and a second row wreathed about the crown. The effect was all Patsy's heart could desire.

It chanced that, just as the carriage drove into Staines, the party in it became aware of a brilliant cavalcade riding towards them. The Princess whispered to Patsy, "The Dukes—look through them, my dear, and do not let yourself be overcome!"

Patsy had no idea of being overcome. She held her head well up, and sat beside the Princess with a pale face but steadfast eyes. The six royal brothers were riding three and three, the Regent being in the middle of the first rank on a splendid iron-grey charger. He had come from a review in Windsor Park with which he had been able to combine the monthly perfunctory visit to his mother and sisters. He was in a hussar uniform, extremely fantastic, the same in which he afterwards asserted that he had

commanded one of the cavalry divisions at Waterloo. He wore a diamond belt, which is not quite according to the regulations of the service. A diamond crown shone on his breast and the feather in his headgear was fixed with a diamond loop.

Behind came Cambridge and York and, on the side nearest to the carriage, the Duke of Lyonesse.

The Regent saluted the Princess and his brothers followed suit, but it was evident that their eyes were all upon Patsy, who fearlessly perused them as if they had been so many statues. As they rode past more than one of the suite turned his head, but of all the salutations the embarrassed and most formal was that of Louis Raincy, who rode with my Lord Headford.

But Patsy was not to be passed over. She waved her hand to him and called out briskly, "Good-day to you, Louis!"

Upon which he could do no less than turn in his saddle and salute her again, an action which evidently brought upon him a flood of questions from his companions. Presently, in answer to an urgent summons, Miss Aline sitting with her back to the horses, could see Louis ride forward and place himself beside the Duke of York. The royal party were evidently full of curiosity and the Princess Elsa, smiling a little, said, "I should not wonder if some of these gentlemen find their way to Hanover Lodge before many days! You are not afraid, Patsy?"

"I am not afraid of any one," cried Patsy, instantly fierce. And she added with something of gratitude in her voice, "Uncle Julian sent me to you, and I am sure that he knows what is best for me. I am quite safe with you!"

"Certainly, dear," said the Princess, "still it would be a great thing if we could tell these vultures that you are soon to be a Princess yourself!"

At which Patsy looked startled but did not reply. The Princess Elsa had never spoken so openly before. She had evidently determined to strike the hot iron.

"The Prince of Altschloss is a good man, a brave soldier, and would, I believe, make an excellent husband. He is devotedly in love with you and would make you the wife of a reigning prince. It would please me greatly—indeed, I may add that it would please your uncle and your father still more, if one day when these Dukes called to spy out the land, they should find Eitel before them, and affianced to you. I do not press you—think well over it, Patsy. It would be the safest and best solution for you, and when I leave England (as I must some day) we should be quite near neighbours."

Patsy was terribly perturbed. She did not care deeply for any man. She had liked to talk to Louis Raincy—at one time perhaps more than to any man. But in the background of her mind there had always lurked a warning of his instability.

Compared to Stair Garland, for instance, he was not to be depended upon. She had seen him often riding with Mrs. Arlington in the park. He never left her side in a ball-room, and rumour was busy with their names.

Even the gentle old queen, who in her leisure moments liked (none better) to ease the tension of her mind with a spice of gossip, had said to her, "Miss Patsy, what is this I hear of your beau—old De Raincy's heir—that he is sticking like a burr to the skirts of the Arlington? I thought there was a marriage forward. From what I am told, little one, I should advise you to look after your property—that is, if you hold it of any value."

"Your Majesty," said Patsy, with very proper submission, yet with a twinkle in her eye, "we have a Scots proverb, 'He that will to Coupar, maun to Coupar'—which being interpreted, means that if Louis wants to go to the Arlington, to the Arlington let him go—and for all I care, stop there!"

"It is a pity," sighed the Queen, "but these young men—ah, there is no advising them. I am sorry too, for the grief to his grandfather must be great. The Raincys

have never been warm friends of our dynasty, but that is all over now—and forgotten on both sides. It would be well if you could do something for him."

She sat still, evidently expecting some confidence. For there was nothing in which Queen Charlotte took more interest than in the love affairs of the young people about her court. Princess Elsa signalled to Patsy to answer, and so finally she managed to say " Your Majesty is very kind, but I have never been engaged to Louis de Raincy. He and I have been playmates all our lives, and I owe him some kindnesses which I shall not forget. But there is not and never has been more than that between us."

The Princess Elsa sat back with a sigh of relief, for she knew that some one of the circle who heard Patsy, would certainly repeat her words to the Prince of Altschloss.

So without exactly knowing how or why, it is certain that from this time forth, the people in the entourage of the Princess Elsa began to consider Miss Patricia Ferris as virtually betrothed to the hereditary ruler of Altschloss. He had even made his demand in form from the Princess, who according to the Austrian etiquette, represented the young lady's absent father, and Princess Elsa had given him her entire permission to press his suit. Still more and better, she frequently took Miss Aline off and left him free to do it, though in any case Miss Aline was the last woman in the world to be a spoil-sport, even though her kind heart might ache for Louis Raincy.

On their next visit to Windsor Queen Charlotte took the Princess aside and pressed her, in her usual motherly fashion, on the subject.

" Of course," she said, " Prince Eitel is only the younger son of a cadet, and his way was cleared to the dukedom on the bloody day of Wagram, when his grand-uncle and three cousins were killed in the same charge. He came to the throne from round the corner. Still he is prince. He cannot help that, and I am in favour of people of our class marrying *in* their own class—— "

" Well, Aunt Charlotte," said the Princess, " I have, as

you know, somewhat grave and personal reasons for not agreeing with you."

The Queen turned her face towards her niece. It was a kindly face, but infinitely sad and lined with more cares than fall to the lot of most women of her age. The ingratitude of sons, the death of daughters, the poor troubled husband, old and witless in the King Charles ground-floor suite, weeping for his lost eyesight or sitting smiling mirthlessly over his violin, had marked her. But in spite of all she had kept the cult of royalty.

Bloods should not mix. The sacred should not seek the profane.

"I know," she said, gently putting her hand out and patting the arm of the Princess, "Brunschweig was no light trial. But are you sure you would have been happier with your ambassador?"

"Yes," said the Princess Elsa quickly, "I am certain—if he stamped upon me, if he killed me, I should be happier."

"You think so," said the Queen, "and I shall not try to make you think otherwise——"

"Because, Aunt Charlotte, neither you nor any one could do that. Julian is as faithful to-day as he was twenty years ago—as loyal, as ready to sacrifice himself. He is the one man to be depended upon."

"Ah, because he has remained your lover. But there is my husband. He is a good man. We have been happy these forty years—without a word, without a quarrel, and yet, when his wits are touched, whose name comes to his lips, whose hand does he feel when I stroke his brow?—not mine—not his old wife's, but that of a woman dead these many years, whom he knew before ever he saw me!"

"Ah," said the Princess, "but you were not wedded to a hulk of corruption, and when the dear King's words are wild, he is not responsible. You know that as well as I. At any rate there is Julian, and he and I have done our duty. But I am fond of Eitel. He at least can marry whom he likes. Patsy is a gentlewoman of unblemished lineage—older than his own—and if he can win her, at least

it will keep my little Eitel from making the mistake which I made."

The Queen slowly nodded her head, thinking deeply.

"After all," she meditated, "Altschloss, though a respectable house, is neither Hapsburg nor Hanover, and a new man like Eitel come in by a turn of the dice, may please himself—but—well (here she smiled) if you have said 'Whom Elsa hath blessed let no man put asunder'—I suppose there is no more to be done!"

"I wish it were as certain as all that," sighed the Princess, "but, in fact, I am not at all sure about Patsy!"

"What," cried the Queen, surprised out of the pensiveness of her matronly gravity, "surely you do not mean to say that the girl would refuse a prince—a reigning prince?"

Elsa shook her head sadly.

"I do not know," she acknowledged, "she watches everything with those big black eyes of hers, and she smiles. She says that one man or another is much the same to her, and I can only hope for the best. But as a matter of fact I have never dared to put the offer of the prince clearly before her. It seems better to accustom her gradually to the idea!"

"And the young man himself—your Eitel of Altschloss does not come of a very patient race—I remember an uncle of his, but no matter—what does he say? How does he take it? Has he spoken to your little Scot?"

"Frankly, I do not know," said the Princess, "I should judge not, by the excellence of their comradeship."

"Is it wounded pride because of the young man of her country—that foolish boy of old De Raincy's? He is always, as I hear, at the flounces of the Arlington."

"I don't think Patsy cares," said the Princess, "if she showed a preference, it would make it easier for me. I should begin to understand her. Little Miss Aline Minto, the chatelaine of Ladykirk, who is with us, may understand her better, but for me I own myself beaten. I cannot get a serious answer out of the girl. If Julian were here——"

"And why is not Julian here?" said the Queen, "I

understand that in your position—but, after all, with Brunschweig living as he is doing, I do not see that you need deprive yourself of his occasional advice."

" Thank you, Aunt Charlotte," said the Princess, stooping and kissing her aunt's cheek, " I shall remember. But you see, Julian killed the Regent's friend Lord Wargrove in a duel for helping one of his companions to carry off Patsy. They charge him also with wounding the Duke of Lyonesse, but that he did not do. Still, he gets the credit for it with the Carlton House set, and they have a warrant out against him. Erskine has seen to that. He cannot come to London, at least not in the meantime."

" Ah," said the Queen, " so your friend delivered us from that rascal Wargrove. That was one service to good order, though of course it is wrong to duel. It is a pity that he could not be here now. If you do not take care, that little gipsy of yours will slip through your fingers. I know what happens to young ladies who flout at princes. There is always another man in the background ! "

" Aunt Charlotte, I am quite sure you are wrong about Patsy," said the Princess.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LOST FOLK'S ACRE

It was a high day and a holiday at the Bothy of the Wild of Blairmore—a high day though a short one—one of the shortest of all the year, though by this time it was well into January. But that made little difference on our misty moors. There the frozen sea-fog bound us and the wind, when there was one, stung extraordinarily bitter.

Sea-fog breezes yellowish (let this be marked), but the mist of the fresh water moors is white with iridescent circles where the low winter sun is trying to peep through. Little sounds carry far. You can hear wild fowl calling far up in the brumous smother which hides the lift. They are voyaging from lands of summer, and are already sorry they came. For here the winter still holds grim, black and yet somehow raw, which was the fault of the yellow sea-fog.

Stair had been up that morning long before the tardy January dawn, Whitefoot had been sent from the farm the night before with the news that Jean would meet him in the bed of the Mays Water opposite Peden's Stone. There was now more freedom of moving about, for the freezing of the snow enabled both man and beast to pass over it without leaving a footmark.

He found Jean standing there in the dim orange-coloured dawn. She was shivering dislike of the morning, which was at once clammy and freezing hard, so that every stone and even the banks were covered with the frozen fog. Jean had a great red shawl that had come from Holland about her head and neck, and so kept herself as comfortable as might be while she waited for her brother.

Stair had had to watch the signs of the countryside

before he dared risk letting himself down into the dark of the Glen. For the sea was always open, and a landing party from the *Britomart* might have lain unseen in any of the fir copses or hidden behind the knolls.

Black and narrow ran the Mays, that at other times flowed so wide and brown and free. The frost had bound it tightly, all save a trickle in the centre, black as ink, and everywhere about clung the icicles, some thick as a man's arm.

"Oh, Stair, here are letters—one for Mr. Julian and one for you," Jean gasped, the sea-fog in her throat, "thankful I am to see you! I thought you would never come. Here, too, are the provisions—be canny with the eggs. They are on the top in a box by themselves, packed in sawdust, but do not be throwing them down wi' a brainge to get at your letters. And there in a big bag are the linen and clothes—cleaner and sweeter could not be, though I say it that washed and laundried them."

"Is Patsy well?" queried Stair, for he knew that Jean must have a letter of her own which she had read already.

"Famous," said Jean—"of course she is well. Are they not going to marry her to a prince——?"

"Not Lyonesse?" The voice of Stair grew suddenly hoarse and threatening. He looked capable of setting off to London with his musket over his shoulder, to finish the job he had begun.

"Goose," quoth his sister, "no—of course not. Somebody she likes—a young and handsome prince from Germany or maybe Austria, and a great friend and near neighbour of the Princess, when she is at home."

"You are mocking me," said Stair, regaining some of his composure. "It is sheer nonsense that you are talking."

"Well," said Jean, adjusting the red Amersfort shawl about her head and neck, "go back and read your letter. You will no doubt find it all written there!"

Stair stood and watched her till she disappeared along the edge of the Water of Mays. He could not ask her any

further questions, having Patsy's prohibition before him. Besides there was his own letter, along with one for her Uncle Julian. The last was by far the thickest, and he wondered greatly as he turned it over in his hand, what it might contain.

He could not read his letter down under the overhanging brow of the copse. It was too dark down there at the water's edge, and so by a great detour he made for the Lost Folk's Acre—that port of final harbourage to which the drowned were brought. It lay high on the cliffs, so lonely that if the Lost Ones were to sit evident on their crumbling head-boards and watch for ships all day long, not even a passing gull would be frighted.

"Dear Stair" (the letter read), "it is no use telling you about all the grand doings I have been at. For you never take the least notice. But I can tell you one bit of news that will interest you. My Lord Duke of Lyonesse is better of his wound, for I have seen him twice. He looks nearly quite right when he is riding on a horse, but when he came with his brother York the other day to see us at Hanover Lodge, he carried a Malacca cane all banded with gold and he limped badly. I don't think he will ever get over it altogether. Of which I was glad, and also proud that you could take so good an aim in the dark. For of course you had no practice in shooting Dukes.

"The Princess was particularly haughty that day, and would hardly ask them to sit down. I said nothing, but bent over my needlework like the good child keeping quiet in the corner. Oh, but they are stupid, these royal people, all except my own Princess and the dear old Queen at Windsor. Neither York nor Lyonesse knew in the least what to say, and the Princess let them stammer on without helping them. I could have laughed.

"What made her more angry still was the way they spoke about Uncle Ju. They said they were sure of getting him, and that the Regent was furious about his killing Wargrove. He could not expect any mercy. And the Princess said, 'Ah, I thought it was only women whom the

Regent abused without mercy—I think your brother Cumberland told me so ! '

" And this made York burst into a roar of laughter, but Lyonesse grew very red and angry, for he fancies himself the favourite of his lordly eldest brother. Then the Princess said to me, ' Go and see that the maids have closed the windows of my room. I am going up there as soon as these gentlemen have gone ! '

" Upon which I escaped, and after a little while the Princess followed me, smiling, and apparently quite pleased with herself.

" ' Now I wonder,' said she, ' what good they suppose they have done themselves by that. I am convinced it was the fault of that gipsy hat with the second ring of roses climbing over the crown. Ah, there is Eitel—I shall be down presently. Go and entertain him ! I hope they met him coming through the park. He would be sure to scowl at them ! '

" Shall I tell you who Eitel is ? Well, if you are nervous and unaccustomed to shocks, sit down in the biggest and strongest chair in the Bothy and take hold of both arms. There—one, two, three. Shut your eyes and grip.

" Well, Eitel is a Prince, Prince Eitel of Altschloss, who wants to marry me ! There. Of course you will not believe it, and indeed, to tell the truth, I hardly do either. But they all want me to—even the dear Queen would be pleased. She said as much only yesterday. I think she was sorry about having helped to stop Elsa marrying Uncle Julian a long time ago.

" And the young man—well, he is a good soldier—has fought a lot against Napoleon, and will fight again. To look at ?—Oh, he is big and round and rosy, with yellow moustaches and cheeks like apples, nice plump red apples. He goes ' Hum-Hem-Hum ' in his throat when he speaks to me, and he always kisses my hand. Generally he calls me ' Most Noble Lady,' and then I wonder how many hundred yards I could give him and beat him in a mile race along the sands. I daresay he would be quite nice if I cared

about princes—because he does not swear all the time, nor gamble away his money with Hangers and Beaujolais and such-like cattle. Nor does he habitually get so drunk that he has to be carried to bed. In his way he is quite a pattern prince, and if I marry him I shall be the Perfect Princess! But shall I? What do you advise? The Principality of Altschloss is not large, but it is rich and the people are very well off and contented, that is when 'Bony' lets them alone. So the Princess says, and she knows all about it, for she lives, as it were, just up the next street—I mean in the next Principality or Duchy or whatever it is.

"They have got me into a corner, Stair, and here in London among great folk I do not see how to get out. It if were only dodging them among the pine of the Glenanmays woods or losing them among the sand-dunes at the Abbey Burnfoot, my feet would trip as lightly as ever they did in the yellow sandals—I think the Prince has written to my father, and I know that the Princess has enclosed a letter to Uncle Julian." (Stair could feel it at that moment between his finger and thumb.)

"So, Stair, they have arranged with everybody, or are in the way of arranging with everybody—except one, Stair—except one.

"They have not yet heard Patsy Ferris speak her mind. They are, poor people, taking a great deal for granted. And there are things in this little girl's mind that she has not told to any one.

"If I married the Prince, I know I should make him desperately unhappy. Yet how to cheat all these wise plan-making people who love me and wish me, according to their lights, the very best sorts of Well— I do not yet see. It will come to me, however. Do you remember how we used to play hide-and-seek so that you could not find me, not even with your dog—I could cheat you so cunningly. Well, Stair, I am not caught yet. If I am hard pressed on land, there is still wind among the tree tops.

"Say nothing of all this screed to Uncle Julian. He will most likely spend the day in writing. Do you go out

somewhere (unless the day is too wet) and write also. I needed to tell you, for though every one here is kind, I cannot be sure of this one or that. And I fear me there is no help for *this* trouble in the gun you carry over your shoulder, Stair. It is not the same sort of carrying off as that of the White Loch, and the Prince with all his apple face and his body like a comfortable bolster means everything that is most honourable and princely. I cannot have him shot.

"And oh, I forgot—the second time that the Royal Dukes—the same pair as before—came hither to Hanover Lodge, Prince Eitel was there and he stood over me all the time they stayed like a soldier on guard, asking me funny questions about my embroidery in which, I am certain, he was not interested a little bit! But they knew well enough that he was the Prince Eitel who had been at Austerlitz and Wagram, and that he could demand of them as a right the satisfaction which they might deny to a commoner. So I was grateful to him for cowing them, though I really believe that your way is the best, Stair. There is nothing like a charge of slugs in the back for teaching a royal duke manners!

"If the worst comes to the worst, do not be surprised if—but I cannot write it down. At any rate do not be surprised at anything I may do—only be ready to help me when I do it. And remain always as I shall, faithful to the memory of the White Loch.

"PATSY."

CHAPTER XXV

THE HIGH STILE

HAVING finished, Stair seemed to wake as from a dream. He had read and re-read the letter. The words buzzed in his ears, mingled with the sharp pain at his heart. Patsy a princess—a real prince making love to her, a man who could be her husband, who might even now have rights upon her, yet whom it would be impossible to deal with as he had dealt with the Duke of Lyonesse ! He felt desperately lonely up there.

The escarpments of the cliffs sank away beneath him into the chill turmoil of the winter sea. He had been sitting on a flat tomb, one of the few cut in stone. The yellow fog had vanished. The moors spread away vague and simple, the fine wreath-curves of the snow only interrupted here and there by the brutal rigidity of the tall stone dykes with the easterly snow-blast still clinging in the chinks and stuffing the crevices.

Everything was colourless, the ground of a bluish lilac, fading imperceptibly into a livid sky. Still half-dazed, Stair looked about him, Patsy's letter in his hand, surprised to find himself out there and alone. The written characters danced before his eyes, and it was only the strongest sense of duty which turned his face towards the Bothy and Julian Wemyss. He was carrying, he knew it well, a letter from the Princess, enclosing and doubtless supporting a demand for the hand of Patsy Ferris.

Whitefoot slunk along at his master's side, his tail and ears eloquently drooped, and his doleful aspect reflecting admirably the mood of his master. But Stair set his teeth and went forward. He found his breakfast waiting

for him, and Julian Wemyss took the letter with his usual grateful urbanity. He was not slow in noticing the depressed state of his companion, though, naturally, he put it down to his having been kept waiting so long in the raw fog.

"I suppose Jean could not come exactly to the moment?" he said, his letter still unopened in his hand.

"No," said Stair, "she was waiting for me, but I came back by the cliffs and the Sailors' Graveyard."

Julian, who knew that Stair never did anything without a reason, asked him if he had found everything clear from the lookout.

"Oh, all clear," said Stair, and sat down to make a pretence of breakfasting. But he could not keep his eyes from wandering in the direction of Julian Wemyss, who, seated in the great chair between the window and the fire, was presently bending his brows over the packet he had received. Eight sheets of a fine and light handwriting like that of the address—from the Princess Elsa, of that there could be no question. Julian read on and on, wrapped up in the daintily written words, unconscious of the thick enclosure on paper like parchment, which had slipped down on the floor of the Bothy. Stair could see the huge black downstrokes of the superscription. He stopped eating and began to clear away.

Julian looked up from his reading at the sudden clattering of pottery.

"Hold there," he said, "it is my day—you must not forget. I claim my rights."

But Stair continued with a smile to prepare for that part of the work which is the curse of every bachelor ménage—the washing-up after.

"I think," he said quietly, "that you will have enough to do with your correspondence—I take everything upon me for to-day. Your pardon, Mr. Wemyss, but I am afraid you have dropped something!"

"Ah, so I have—it is nothing—I am much obliged to you."

He spoke the truth. It was nothing to him—what indeed, could be anything in comparison with those eight closely written sheets of large letter paper from his Princess—only the half of which he had yet mastered. Elsa of Saxe-Brunschweig had never written him so long a letter since the day when they agreed, long ago in Vienna, that for the good of her house and country she must marry the old duke-elector.

So it came to pass that Julian Wemyss was grateful to Patsy for bringing him such good fortune. Nor was he surprised out of measure when he heard that his niece had the offer of the hand of a Prince reigning in his own right.

But better than any one else, Julian could measure the greatness of the Prince's affection, because he knew what these royal and grand ducal persons think of their order. He saw that it was in some sort a defiance flung at the court of Austria, which Eitel of Altschloss had served so bravely, and which had done nothing for the young captain of horse till he found himself suddenly pistoned into a princedom.

Before going further he read the Prince's letter. It was in German, and most courteously expressed. Julian Wemyss thought well of the man, and saw no reason why he should not assist, so far as he could, in settling Patsy in so enviable a position. It would be new, of course, but Patsy had been carefully taught. The best of blood ran in her veins, and by nature she was quick, sympathetic and receptive.

The people of Altschloss were simple and would appreciate frankness and simplicity in others. It was, in fact, almost an ideal arrangement, and besides, at Altschloss she would find herself in the immediate vicinity of the Princess Elsa. Nay, she would enter her castle and begin her duties with the Princess by her side. Nothing could possibly turn out better. It was wonderful what Elsa could do. There was no doubt she had caused Patsy to go to London and brought the Prince across half Europe

simply that she might make a love-match—one that would be the very opposite in every respect of her own unfortunate experience.

Julian Wemyss could contain himself no longer. He must share his delight with some one. So he turned to his companion, who was busy with the "drying" of the dishes and utensils.

"Stair," he cried, "what do you think? Our little Patsy is going to be a Princess!"

"Ah!" said Stair, calmly, without raising his eyes, and finished with peculiar care the drying of the tall wine-glass which had been brought over from Abbey Burnfoot by Joseph's special intervention, and reserved for "the master, who is partial to it."

"Patsy is going to marry the Prince of Altschloss, a man of much courage and reputation. He was already at the wars when I left Vienna, but I knew and appreciated his uncle, by whose death at Wagram, Prince Eitel, then a captain of cavalry in the Bohemian contingent, came to the title."

"You have heard all this from Patsy?" said Stair suddenly, shooting out his words as from a catapult. Julian Wemyss, with the trained judgment of the moods of men and women quick within him, looked once at the young fellow who pursued his business so methodically.

Could Stair also—? (he thought). No, surely, that was impossible. Yet who could number the victims of Patsy? He himself—if it had not been for the Princess and the tables of consanguinity—he knew that he might very well have committed any folly for Patsy's sake. And why not Stair?

"No," he answered aloud while these thoughts were passing through his mind, "I have not heard from Patsy. She might have written a note and forgotten to enclose it. Of that she is quite capable."

But to himself he acknowledged that the boy was right. It *was* certainly strange that along with the detailed history of all the phases of the attachment which was

enshrined for him in the clear-cut French of the Princess, with the formal but manly demand of his good offices written by the Prince Eitel, there should not also be a single word from Patsy herself. However, he must not let this young man put him down.

"I have no doubt," he said, "that she has written to her father. Would it be possible, think you, to arrange a meeting with him to-day?"

. . . . . .

Stair stood in the doorway looking tall and strong, though in figure rather spare, his Viking head in striking contrast with the dark hair threaded with grey, and the fine, delicate features of the ex-ambassador.

"Difficult, but not impossible," he said, "but I must consider. We cannot afford to show ourselves in daylight anywhere off the Wild, and least of all near the military road which passes Cairn Ferris House at the valley head."

He looked out at the sky. It was a dull slate grey, and grew darker down towards the edge of the cliffs. He noted that the sea-fog was already lipping over, and he knew that certainly long before sunset the yellow fog would again be marching triumphant across the Wild of Blairmore, blotting out everything.

"I think," he said, "that it would be safe to send to Cairn Ferris about three. It will be almost dark then, and if you write a note asking Mr. Ferris to meet you at the High Stile—that will be safest, for it is on Raincy ground and less likely to be watched than the Ferris valleys—I shall see that it reaches Mr. Ferris if he is at home in his own house."

Julian Wemyss thanked Stair and turned away to get ready the note for Patsy's father. And as he wrote his mind was busy with a new conjecture. He wondered how he could have been so blind. He prided himself on divining the reasons of things and the hearts of men But now he seemed to see Stair Garland for the first time. How different he was from all those who had been his companions. He himself could associate with the young

man without any feeling of awkwardness or inequality. He did not even speak like his brothers. He studied deeply and read much. His opinions were singularly original and his criticisms often valuable. Yet he strained after no effect, and was ever more ready in action than word.

Three months ago Stair had never seen a rapier, and now Julian Wemyss needed all his skill to stand up to a dazzling swiftness of attack, which together with length of arm and three extra inches of height might well make his pupil no mean adversary when the buttons were off the foils.

. . . . . .

The letter was dispatched by Whitefoot to Jean, to be given to either of her brothers. Stair knew that the meeting would be arranged if Mr. Ferris could be found. There was nothing left for him to do but to get his writing-materials and, between the leaves of a copy-book, begin his reply to Patsy. He had not informed her uncle of her letter—neither would he tell her father, if he should meet him. Patsy had forbidden him.

Besides, it was certain that whatever these people might arrange among themselves, Patsy would end by doing just as she liked. Indeed, her father, Adam, had never in all his life questioned his daughter's comings or goings, nor interfered with her wishes. He had done his best for her education, so long as Patsy desired to be educated. He had provided governesses, but these generally stayed but a short time at Cairn Ferris, not being accustomed to be left alone during lesson-time because their pupil had gone bird-nesting with Stair Garland, or to the moss with the farm lads to fetch peats, from mere thoughtlessness of heart and delight in the open air.

Later, Adam Ferris had acquiesced in his daughter's wish for complete emancipation, and had delivered her education up to his brother-in-law. He had taken even such serious escapades as that of the race to save the lads from the press-gang, and that of the White Loch, as due to the strange nature of his daughter, and had been content

to believe that all would turn out well because these things happened to Patsy, and Patsy was certainly different from any one else.

No doubt he would have revenged the insult perhaps even more sternly than his brother-in-law had done, if Julian had not begged that the matter should be left entirely in his hands. But he had so long been accustomed to give Patsy her head, that no really definite action could be expected from him now, at least not on his own responsibility.

It was all the more needful, then, that Julian should put his duty before him. He was a father and the Prince would expect to see him in the matter of his daughter's hand. He must set off at once for London.

The grey noon darkened rapidly as the long-pent sea-mist overflowed the cliff, wallowing and billowing like an oceanic invasion, over the face of the moor. Whitefoot brought back hidden in his collar the simple message, "I shall be there," signed with the well-known crabbed fist of "Adam Ferris," traditional in his family for some hundreds of years, which seemed completely identical with signatures in the family chartularies.

By this time Stair had finished his letter to Patsy, but with unusual care he corrected it, and had it recopied before it was time to set out. He would send it on to Jean that night, and it would be in Patsy's hands before these wise people, to whom she had not written, had done taking counsel together. Meanwhile he stood at the door of the Bothy, looking across the dim wastes of white, hardly a single heather-bush showing up under the solid cover of snow. Only here and there he could see a deep black gash which was the side of a moss-hag at the bottom of which a pool of ink-black water lay frozen solid.

Nevertheless, in spite of the stern grip of winter, there was a tingle in his blood and a difference, subtle but quite unmistakeable, which told of a change.

Spring was in the air. Far-off as yet, and only, as it were, a conditional promise, there came a softness on the

light airs that came breathing up over the sea, which told that the frost-sting was gone. The snow had stopped creaking underfoot, and the march would be easier—which would be just as well, for they had a long road and a dark before them, and Julian Wemyss was neither by age nor training an expert hill-man.

But something else oppressed Stair's mind. The soft breathing off the sea would melt the snow, clear away the ice and lay the Bothy of the Wild open to attack. At Cairnryan the press-gang would be reformed. They might find their way to a spot to which they had once been led, and—most important of all, some night towards the dark of the moon, the *Good Intent* would be seen, between the star-shine and the luminous sea, making her way up the firth with the first "run" of the year.

And with her Julian Wemyss would depart for Lisbon on his way to Vienna, where he would prepare the way for the future Princess of Altschloss.

Stair's lips tightened. He watched the treacly pour of the yellow fog thickening about him. His eyes noted mechanically the precise shade of darkness when it would be wise for them to set out for the High Stile, but his heart was sick with a sense of his own loneliness. He would be left to fight out a useless battle—with Patsy far off and eternally inaccessible. What after all would it matter if he took the king's shilling and went to the wars?

But his own observant eyes automatically reporting on the darkening landscape checked him.

"It is time for us to start!" he said quietly enough to Julian Wemyss, who rose to his feet and put away the letter of the Princess which he had been going over for the twentieth time.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE GIBBET RING

GHASTLY behind the High Stile just as you cross over into Raincy property, rose the three tall trees of the Gibbet Ring. Once the Raincys had jurisdiction to hang men and drown women, and it was on this "moot-hill" that they dispensed their feudal laws as seemed to them good. There was something grim about the place even now, and as Julian approached, the High Stile stood up against the last flare of red in the evening sky not yet blotted out by the mist, gaunt and sinister as a guillotine.

And the dark silhouette of Adam Ferris, waiting for them, might well have been that of the executioner himself. Stair saluted Adam Ferris, who held out his hand frankly enough to his tenant's son.

"So, Stair," he said, "you have been missing for a long time from your father's table. I had the honour of dining with Diarmid Garland yesterday, and heard nothing of you. Ah, Julian! So this Captain of the Coast has been taking care of you."

He turned to his brother-in-law, who had come more slowly up out of the darkness of the glen, following Stair as closely as might be in the uncertain dusk, for the eyes of the ex-ambassador were not habituated to night duty like those of his guide.

Stair Garland drew back a little after he had seen that the two men were safe in the shelter of the great Raincy ash trees. He would let them talk the matter out. But his mind followed their argument, such as it would doubtless be. He knew the end—that Julian would persuade Adam Ferris to go to London to arrange the future of his

daughter. Adam would not be so easy to persuade. Not only would he dislike returning all the way to London, but he would be far more doubtful than his kinsman as to the power he could exercise over Patsy's choice.

Julian Wemyss naturally thought that no position could be better or more fortunate for any girl than that which the Prince Eitel was offering his niece. But Adam was constitutionally unable to imagine that any dignity could add to the position she already held as heiress of four hundred years of Ferrises of Cairn Ferris.

Stair wandered away up the slope towards the Gibbet Knoll, Whitefoot stealing along at his heels, walking almost in his tracks, but with his ears cocked to catch the slightest unexplained noise. As he arrived under the scant foliage of the few remaining gaunt trees, tall branchless trunks with a mere plume at the top of each, bent permanently away from the south-west by the sea-winds, he walked to the small stone platform on which the Baron had issued his decree. From that point of outlook it was possible to see the towers of Castle Raincy looming over the grey sea of vapour, which filled all the lower ground and now and then flung out an arm that momentarily snatched at and submerged the Gibbet Knoll.

Stair had not gone far when something large and dark darted across the path between the trees where the snow had been blown a little bare. Stair was instantly in pursuit. It was not a time when he could afford to overlook anything. A man it was, certainly, for the moment the thicker underbrush was reached he rose half erect and went plunging head foremost into it.

But Whitefoot was before him, and had him by the throat before he could run ten yards. Stair, immediately behind, saw the man's hand go to his belt, and comprehended that Whitefoot's life was in danger.

With a spring he was upon him. One hand gripped the fugitive's wrist. With a pull backward he had him on the ground. His foot pushed aside the eager jaws of Whitefoot and saved the man's life. Then he knelt stolidly on one

arm, holding the other extended while he searched the man for arms in a swift professional manner. A knife and a pair of pistols were his booty. These he tossed aside and bade the dog keep guard over them.

"Now who are you and what are you doing here?" he demanded in a hoarse whisper in the fellow's ear. "Speak, man, if you have any wish to live."

The man kept silence, though he had given up struggling. But it was evident that he was not anxious to be recognised.

"This way, then," growled Stair, "and the worse for you if you have been out after any mischief."

He dragged the man roughly enough out upon the open surface of the snow, and knelt upon him, bringing his face close to that of his captive.

"Good God," he cried, forgetting his danger in his astonishment, "Eben the Spy!"

. . . . . .

But the man lay limp in Stair's grasp. He appeared to have fainted. However, Stair knew a cure for that. He took a handful of the harsh half-melted sugar-loaf snow and rubbed the spy's face hard. Then he pulled him up into a sitting position.

"Come, Eben," he growled, "no malingering! I have no time to waste on you. If you do not get ready very quickly to do as I tell you, there is a chance that you will be found out here in the morning with an extra hole in your head which none of his Majesty's regimental surgeons will be able to plug—at least not in time to do you any good!"

"I . . . am . . . not what you think—indeed I am not," the man gasped, as he began to get his breath back after Stair's rough handling.

"That's as may be," said his captor, "you are too open-minded a man to expect me to believe a syllable of what you say, merely on your word."

"No, sir," said Eben, "but I am the more to be pitied—I am outlawed by the Government, and your people shot at me as I was escaping——"

"Ah," said Stair, "you mean when you fled with the

Duke's money and jewels the night of the little trouble at the White Loch."

"Indeed," said Eben the Spy, "I am altogether on your side, though I cannot expect you to believe it. But I can bring you a good witness. Even before what occurred there, I had given up all my work for the Government. I intended to make a bolt for it anyway. I knew it was only a question of time when I should be shot. I had been missed already more than once, and, indeed sir, I carry lead in my body at this moment."

Stair grinned so that the man caught the flash of his teeth in the uncertain glimmer, and got his first ray of hope that his life might be spared. He knew very well that nothing he could say would convince Stair of his good faith, but it might be possible to soften him by taking the situation with a certain humour.

"Ah, you laugh, sir," he continued, "but it is no light thing to be a superintendent of recruitment and to belong to the parish of Stoneykirk!"

"Say a press-gang spy!" flashed Stair, "that will be the truth."

"A press-gang spy, then," said Eben meekly, "I am not boggling about words——"

"And your business to betray your own folk!"

"I always endeavoured to temper justice with mercy," said the man, feeling at his throat with one of his now disengaged hands.

"Come—none of that," said Stair, "at least, have the courage of your rascality. I shall like you none the worse. Where have you been all this time?"

"Well," said the man, "that's telling. But I know you, Stair Garland, and I have confidence in the man I am talking to——"

"If you abuse that confidence you are good enough to profess in me," said Stair with biting irony, "I beg you to remember that it will be at a price!"

"I know—I know, sir," the man from Stoneykirk moaned, "I should not dream of deceiving you."

"Better not," said Stair, "you are on our side, you say. Take care and do not forget again, or the next time you will not be missed. I shall go spy-hunting myself."

"I swear to you——" he began, gasping at the thought.

"Do not swear—I would not believe you if you swore on a pile of Bibles as high as Criffel!"

"But you would believe my uncle Kennedy on his bare word——"

"What uncle?" queried Stair, sharply. "D'ye mean Kennedy McClure of Supsorrow?"

"The same, sir—you would believe him if he spoke a good word for me?"

Stair paused a moment before answering. The Laird of Supsorrow had lent his horses for the carrying off of Patsy, but it was quite certain that had he known the risks, or the purpose for which they were to be used, he would have done nothing of the kind. He was too deep in the traffic, and had used his money to finance too many cargoes.

"Yes," he answered at last, "I would take your uncle's word, if he says that he will go bail that you mean to be faithful to us. But how can I get that word—Kennedy McClure is in London."

"I know that," said the spy, "but I have been abiding all the winter at Supsorrow with my uncle. He gave me shelter and aid when my life was in danger on every side, when I was hunted like a partridge on the mountains——"

"You would make an excellent preacher, Eben, and I daresay you are telling the truth for once. If you have been with us——"

"Will this convince you, sir?" the spy broke in eagerly, seeing his chance, "I have known all the winter that you and Mr. Wemyss were at the Bothy. I knew that you met with Joseph from the Burnfoot, and that your washing was done at Glenanmays. Now there is a reward out for Mr. Julian, sir, and yet I have never breathed a word!"

"Lucky for you, or you would never have breathed another," growled Stair, "but there does seem to be something in what you say. That reward—your uncle must

have had something to say against that. It must have gone hard against the grain with you."

"I beg that you will think of my own position, Mr. Stair—I might have made my peace!"

"Ah, you mean about the Duke's money and the jewels—no, I do not forget that part of it, Eben. I shall further confer with you as to what shall be done with these. In the meantime—do not budge. Here, watch him, Whitefoot!"

And very calmly Stair picked up the pistols and reprimed them. Then, having stuck the sheath-dagger into his belt under his coat, he faced his captive.

"In the meanwhile you are coming back with us to the Bothy. I don't know what I shall do with you yet. But at any rate I cannot afford to run any chances. You must stay with us till we get the first ship off. Perhaps if you behave well, you shall have a passage on her. But in the meantime—right-about-face . . . *march!*"

The spy obeyed, though there were several things for which he would have wished to stipulate. But Stair had a newly primed pistol pointed midway between his ears as viewed from behind, and the spy felt keenly the one-sidedness of any discussion in such a situation. He marched down the hill, guided now to right and anon to left by a growled order from Stair. Whitefoot was in front, looking over his shoulder and occasionally showing his teeth. In this order the three arrived at the hollow where they had left Adam and Julian. The pair were still in earnest debate, so the little procession swerved away to the right to leave them to themselves.

"Evidently," thought Stair, "Patsy's father has been harder to convince than I had supposed. I'll wager it is the journey to London which sticks in his gizzard."

In this somewhat inelegant form, Stair expressed what was the truth.

"I do not see," said Adam Ferris, obstinately, "what particle of good I could do if I were to take up my residence in London for the rest of my life. I let Patsy go there

because you thought it necessary, but I shall be still more glad to have her home again. She can marry a Prince if she likes or she can marry the Prince's gentleman. She will neither marry nor refrain from marrying because of anything you or I can say. I know Patsy better than you do, Julian. She comes from your side of the house, and the fact is she is far too like yourself ever to ask or take advice."

"But think how necessary your presence will be," Julian insisted, "it is not fair to leave a girl alone at what may prove to be the crisis of her fate."

"Well, it was none of my doing, Julian," said the Laird of Cairn Ferris, "I should not have sent her to a princess for the perfecting of her education. But you insisted upon it. Well, I trust my daughter. I have trusted her in greater dangers than any which can arrive through this Austrian young man. Never fear, Patsy will clear her own feet. The Princess shall have an answer to her letter, and the wooer as well, but I would not to go London to push the matter, no, not if she were to be an empress!"

And from this position Adam Ferris, with characteristic doggedness, was in no wise to be moved.

"You put me in a very awkward position," said Julian, discontentedly, "I cannot go myself, and even if I did, it would not be the same thing as the protection and approval of her father——"

A light broke upon Adam, and he smiled grimly.

"I think I remember your telling me, Julian, that in asking for a maid's hand in these countries, it was the correct etiquette for the nearest relatives of the bridegroom to come in state to the home of the parents of the bride, to ask for their daughter's hand. Now at Cairn Ferris I shall be glad to receive and to entertain to the best of my ability any of this Prince Eitel's family, or the Prince himself if he likes to make the journey. But you yourself have made me a strict believer in etiquette in such matters, and from Cairn Ferris I shall not stir!"

At which Julian Wemyss snorted aloud and broke off the interview.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DUKES . . . AND SUPSORROW

EVERY good action has its fruit, though the doer of it but seldom plucks it in this world. Contrariwise the fruits of ill-done deeds are early ripeners, and it is seldom the teeth of the children that are set on edge.

Patsy, faring leisurely westward to meet the Princess in the park and be driven home, at the corner of Lyonesse House, just where you turn towards the green of the tree-tops discerned at the street's end, came within the sound of a mighty voice.

A tall, heavily built man of fierce aspect and red choleric face was picking himself up off the ground, opposite a house from which he had been forcibly ejected, and a crowd of ordinary street loafers was gathering about. Patsy would have turned away, but there was something curiously familiar about the tones of the voice and the imaginative dialect which drew her in spite of herself.

"Fower against yin!" shouted the voice; "and three o' them I hae markit. Whaur's your Dukes noo? I hae gi'en yin o' them a fine black eye. If Dukes will not pay their debts, faith, I'll pay their skins. I had a punch at the fat yin too, and doon he went like a bag o' wat sand!"

Patsy hurried forward, elbowing her way vigorously, and the beauty of her dress even more than the dark intensity of her face, caused the throng to make way. She saw the man clearly now, and already the crowd was beginning to seek for missiles.

"Kennedy McClure," she said, taking hold of the man's arm, "come your ways out o' this and as fast as may be——"

" Lea' me alane, I tell ye," he cried, " I will go back and take another punch at them—all six at a time—Dukes that will not pay their debts ! "

" Quiet now ! I am Patsy Ferris of Cairn Ferris—Adam's daughter, and a friend. Here, laird, get into this coach " (she had beckoned one from a stand and given a direction), " there, Supsorrow, into this coach and bide you still as I bid ye. You are going to see the inside of a gaol if you stay where you are. The rascals want no better. Now be quiet, Supsorrow, I am my father's daughter, and I know what is good for you."

By this time the carriage was in motion. She had taken out a pair of spare handkerchiefs such as women carry, and was dusting his knee-breeches when Kennedy came to himself.

" Patsy—Patsy Ferris grown a great leddy ! No—what is that ye are after—then ye shall not !—Let my shoe-buckles alane—I'm tellin' ye ! "

" You are going to meet a princess," said Patsy, polishing away; " and I intend that you shall do no discredit to Galloway."

" A princess—hech, let me get oot o' this," cried the angry gentleman-farmer, making attempts to reach the door; " I could not touch her, but I'd be feared that I could not keep my tongue off ony o' that breed."

" Oh, she is none of ' that breed,' as you say." Here Patsy resumed her seat, and after a general inspection set Laird Supsorrow's cocked hat straight on his head, and pronounced that he would do.

The Princess was waiting for her friend at the park entrance, and she seemed somewhat surprised when she saw her advancing in company with a big solidly built countryman, with his seals dangling and silver buckles shining at knee and shoe-latchet.

But Princess Elsa instantly understood. Patsy had discovered a countryman lost in London, and with the friendliness which characterised her she had brought him on to taste of the hospitality of Hanover Lodge. Accord-

ingly she smiled her most friendly smile as Patsy made the presentation.

"Did I not tell you, Patsy?" she said; "there was a 'visitor' in the tea this morning."

And she held out her hand which Kennedy of Supsorrow instantly grasped and shook heartily.

"I'm sair obleeged to ye, ma leddy," he said, "this is mair honour than ever I thought wad come my road in this world. And I hae kenned Miss Patsy ever since I catched her up my sugar-ploom tree and she pelted me wi' the ploom-stanes. Ech, she was a besom, and I'm thinkin' she is no muckle better yet!"

The Princess invited Kennedy to take the seat opposite to them and be driven home. She was really very glad to see any one who came to her from Patsy's country.

"Faith," said honest Kennedy, "her and me does not aye agree. She's ower fond o' stravagin' through my fields after a trashery o' wild flooers, and leavin' gates open ahint her! But she's aye a bonny thing to see, and she plays the mischief wi' the lads yonder. I used to like a lass like that when I was young—and noo I'm auld, I hae still a saft side for Miss Patsy—though I *do* wish, ma leddy, that ye would speak to her aboot shutting the yetts after her!"

The Princess, after the speech had been interpreted to her, promised to do her best in the matter of the gates, and during their drive to Hanover Lodge, he kept the Princess immensely amused with the story of his encounter with the two Dukes.

The matter needed to be interpreted and in places, expurgated, but in substance it ran as followeth—

"I cam' to London to get the price o' a pair o' horse and a fine new carriage—as good as new onyway—oh, ye have seen the turn-out, Miss Patsy. Aye, aye—it *had* served the Laird o' the Marrick a while, I will not deny—that is, not to you—but it was a fine faceable carriage whatever, before the lad that fired on the Duke dang it a' to flinders. I reckoned the total value at twa hundred

pounds, and it was the odd hundred-and-fifty I caa'ed roond to collect at the Duke's hoose.

" The flunkey in the fine good-braided reid coatie wasna sure aboot lettin' me in, but I soon had my double-soled shoe in the kink o' the door and afore my lad kenned, I was inside the graund hall. I took a look aboot me, very careful, and, guid faith, the lackeys were standing round as thick as thistles o' the field in their red plush breeks. Only they didna look as if they were the stuff to put *me* oot.

" So I explained to him that appeared to be the heid yin, the naitur' o' my errand. Very ceevil I was, but when I had dune he just laughed and the rest they laughed after him.

" ' You have come to the wrong shop, my man,' says he, ' pay a debt in a Royal Duke's house—who ever heard of the like ? Ye must go to Parliament about that ! '

" ' Then,' said I, ' ye are gaun to hear the like noo ! '

" And down I sat on a fine soffy to wait for the Duke. They cried to one another to come and ' put me oot,' that the Duke and his brother would be doon afore lang, and that it would never do for him to find me there—it was as much as their places were worth !

" Then when they cam' to lay hands on me, and I aye keepit on saying ower and ower to mysel' as if it were a lesson, ' The big yin's nose, and your e'e, and the ither chap's jaw ! ' They could see my knuckles clenched middlin' firm—and so they stoppit to think about it. There was nae crowdin' to be first ! Na, fegs !

" Juist then there was a sound o' laughing and talkin', and four gentlemen cam' doon the stairs. The first two were braw, and the others ahint were officers—just plain sodger officers, but they were a' lauchin' throughither as pack as thieves.

" There was ane o' the first twa with the blue sashes that limpit. Says I to mysel', ' That's Stair Garland's chairge o' buckshot, and him I took to be my man. So I askit him civilly to pay me the hundred-and-fifty pund that was

due me on the horses, and no sooner were the words oot o' my mouth, than he swore he would have me hung, drawn and quartered, for a murdering rogue, a thief and a liar.

"I heard him till he was clean oot o' breath, and then I explained again. But he was deaf as ony adder, and only cried, him and his brither baith, for the officers to throw me oot at the window. Then one of the officers blew a whistle, and I kenned what that was for.

"'Nae guards wi' biggonets for Kennedy McClure,' says I. 'Here's for ye! Come on, ye spangled rogues—the whole thieving dollop of ye!'

"And with that I let drive amang them, and there's twa o' the dukes and at least yin o' the officers that will not show their faces for a day or two. The leddies would not think them bonny. They are signed 'Kennedy of Supsorrow—his mark!' Oh—no! But they were ower mony for me at the last. They got me aff my feet and flang me into the street wi' a clash that near split the paving-stanes. Then, when the low ribaldry o' the toon was gettin' my birses up, and they had sent to fetch the guard, up comes this bonny young leddy, and speerited me awa' in a coach, me swearin' ootragious and maist unwillin'—just like a fool tyke that hasna had eneuch o' a fecht. Syne she brushes me and cossets me, and so here I am, madam, at your service, and no fit for the company of my betters, being but a landward man with little education and by nature a man of wrath far beyond 'ithers."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE "GREEN DRAGON"

KENNEDY MCCLURE did not inhabit Hanover Lodge, though the Princess pressed her hospitality upon him. He knew his place, he said. He might be Laird of Supsorrow and all that. His cattle were upon a thousand hills, but for all that he was just a rough-spun Galloway farmer body and he would not disgrace the company of no great ladies by his ignorances.

The truth was that he had a horror of the whole genus "lackey," and he could not even pass the soberly clad "gentlemen" of the Princess without a quivering of the muscles and a clenching of the fists. He found himself much more comfortable at the adjoining Green Dragon Inn, which stands near the river just on the London side of the toll-bar.

All the same he went often to see Patsy, and upon occasion would stay for luncheon, where the originality of his language and the quaintness of his dress pleased the Princess and her guests. The Laird of Supsorrow in his coat of blue and silver, his buff waistcoat and corded moleskin small clothes, his silver buckles and broad silver thumb-ring, his gold snuff-mull and the cowries clashing at his fob, was considered the type of the real Scottish countryman. He was really infinitely like the later caricatures of John Bull than anything counted distinctively Scottish—that is, till you heard him speak.

To Patsy he grew increasingly necessary. His sonorous Doric brought her back to the land of wet west winds, of blue inrushing seas, of far-stretching heather and sudden-dipping valleys where the birch-leaves and pine-needles

play tremulous games at hide-and-seek with speckled trout in light-sprinkled pools.

For during these days Patsy went about with a load on her heart. It was only partly her fault, but the fact was that she had let herself drift a little. She had in no way recognised or accepted the proposals of the Prince of Altschloss. But neither had she definitely refused them. The last course grew increasingly difficult, and, except Miss Aline, who was sympathetic but without marked initiative outside the matter of jam-making and housewifery, there was no one in whom Patsy could confide.

In her heart she was firmly resolved not to marry the Prince. But the Princess had been so kind, even so affectionate after her manner, and Uncle Julian would be so disappointed—that against her better judgment Patsy let matters drift. Her father was so non-committal and far-off that no help could be got out of him. Even had he been in the next room, he would not have helped her to decide, though he might have been useful in other ways. But as it was, she had to think and act for herself. The old Earl continued his visits, generally appearing on the Friday afternoon and frequently staying over to supper. At first he was not wholly pleased to find Kennedy McClure, his enemy and victor in many a hard-contested land-bargain, established as a friend of the Princess Elsa. But when he had seen how well the man carried himself, how simple and unobtrusive were his manners, he called to mind that the Supsorrow McClures were of good blood, and that, though they had taken the Orange and Hanoverian side, they had never grasped at Raincy property during the black days of the attainder, as the Bunny-Bunnys and Dalrymples had done—on whom be the blackest of Raincy anathemas!

Now the Laird of Supsorrow was a severely regular man, and always took a daily walk through the park or along the river-bank to watch the craft, the bustle of the tow-path, the wrangling of the sea-coal porters—all the sights and sounds of the waterside so strange to him. Patsy fell

easily into the habit of accompanying him. There was a freshness and yet a friendliness in the sound of that deep voice, unmistakable and weighty, yet with curiously tender inflections in it when he addressed Patsy.

Patsy does not know herself how she first began to confide in this man. Perhaps she had a severe dose of home-sickness one day, and the Galloway voice, speaking broadly as they talked at Glenanmays, as Jean and Diarmid and Fergus and Agnew spoke, made her do it. For Miss Aline spoke dainty old lady Scots, but without the broad accent of the moors, which was not at all the same thing to Patsy.

The shrewd old man divined a good deal too. Patsy did not care to talk about anything but the Valleys. She rejected topic after topic and returned to the Free Trade, the "running" of cargoes, the lads who had beaten the press-gang and their chief, Stair Garland.

Kennedy tried her once or twice on the subject of her marriage, and even slily addressed her once or twice as "Princess." This last "try-on" was successful, for Patsy burst forth.

"I forbid you to say that. I will not be so misnamed. There is nothing in it, I tell you. My consent has never even been asked. They are trying to drive me into it, but I shall show them! Oh, if only I knew any way of getting away. It will come to that in the end. I have thought of coaches and so on, but that would cost money, more than I have got, and besides, they might get faster horses and catch me. I have written to my father and he only tells me that no one can possibly marry me against my will. I have only to say 'no'—as if I have ever got the chance. They all take it for granted!"

"Then you dinna want to marry this grand Prince?" said Kennedy, feigning astonishment; "how can a lass not want to have such a great title? There are thousands that would jump at it."

"Well, I won't. I am not going to be a Princess, but

just Patsy Ferris of Cairn Ferris. Oh, Mr. Kennedy, I wish you could help me."

"Weel," said the Laird of Supsorrow, tapping his snuff-box meditatively, "may be I might—if so be I could see our way oot at the farther end."

"Oh, there is a way," cried Patsy, clasping both hands about the laird's arm, and looking up into his face, to the wonder and admiration of the passers-by, who envied the proud father of so charming a daughter—especially when the old man walked fast to get clear of a string of trace-horses, and Patsy took to skipping on one foot to keep up with him.

"Oh, will you—how good of you!" she exclaimed, clutching his sleeve tight. "I thought of dressing up and running away to sea as a cabin-boy. I was so desperate. But, really, all I want is to win safe back to Galloway and—to be let do as I like."

"That last," said the Laird drily, "is, so far as I have observed, what the hale race o' weemen-kind exclusively desire and seek after in this life—juist leave to do as they like."

Then he added cautiously, "Would you go decently to your father's house if I landed ye on the Back Shore? Now tell me honestly, Miss Patsy!"

"Well, I might—upon conditions——!"

"Ah, I suppose the conditions we have just been talking about."

"Something like them," said Patsy smiling; "but, then, my father has always let me do as I like, and he will now, if only I could get at him—*by himself!* Only you see, there's Uncle Julian. He's a dear, and I love him, but for him all that the Princess says is gospel—all that she wants must be done instantly. That is why I am here. That is why this Austrian applejack is forced into the deadly breach and made to make love to me. I don't think he wants to in the least. It is the Princess who is too strong for him, as she is too strong for Uncle Ju, and as she

may prove too strong for me, if I don't get out of this and run away ! "

" We'll see, bairn ! We will just see ! " was all she could get out of Kennedy McClure.

. . . . . .

Two events fruitful of consequences followed closely on this talk which Patsy had with the Laird of Supsorrow. The first of these was a visit which Patsy received about ten of the clock the very next morning. She was breakfasting in Miss Aline's sitting-room after a cool ramble in the garden. The Princess did not often appear before noon, so Miss Aline and Patsy had the morning to themselves.

" A lady to see Miss Ferris," said the maid, who, in consequence of Miss Aline's prejudice, had been provided to wait upon them; " no, the lady would not give her name. It was Miss Ferris she asked to see, and as soon as possible. No, Miss Aline, I do not think it was some one asking for money. She came in a carriage with liveries, quite the lady."

Patsy went down immediately, and in the Gold Parlour she found the Lady Lucy Raincy—Lady Lucy in tears, Lady Lucy in a pleasant fluffy desolation of woe. She flung her arms about the girl's neck and wept freely on her shoulder.

" Oh, help me," she sobbed, " you *will* help me, I know. I have not always seemed a good friend to you, but I have always really loved you. Only you know, a mother with an only son—I suppose I was jealous. And oh, how I wish I had made Louis marry you then——"

" *Then*," said Patsy, turning sharply, " when ? "

" When he wanted to and spoke to me about it ! If only I had let him ! "

" But *I* would not have ' let him ' (as you call it), not then nor any other time ! "

" But oh, be kind now," pleaded the mother, her underlip wickering so that Patsy, even in the act of standing on her dignity, was somehow touched.

"Yes—yes, I will do all I can—of course, Lady Lucy. I mean to be kind," cried Patsy, instantly remorseful, "only I won't be given away like a packet of sweets without my consent being asked!"

"No, nothing of the kind—of course not," said the Lady Lucy, glad to arrive at her purpose with any sacrifice of dignity; "but now you must come away with me at once and help to keep Louis from marrying that horrid Mrs. Arlington, as he swears he will. And he is defying his grandfather, who may have a fit any moment and die—he is so angry—or else kill Louis, I don't know which. As I came out of the door I heard the Earl call out that he would take the dog-whip to him and thrash him within an inch of his life for an insolent puppy. And you know how proud Louis is. So you must come instantly with me and put a stop to it. You know he will listen to you. He won't to me—he pushed me aside, telling me not to meddle with men's business, when his grandfather declared that he would disinherit him of every penny he could lay his hands upon, and leave him with the bare title and as poor as Job."

"But," said Patsy, holding back, "Louis would not care a bit what I said. Why should he? If he wants to marry Mrs. Arlington, what can I say to keep him from doing it?"

The poor lady flopped spongily upon her knees, and taking hold of Patsy's short morning-frock, she besought her to be kind to the most unfortunate of mothers.

"You must come back with me," she wailed, growing more insistent, "you are the only one he really cares about. He used to say so even when—when I did not want him to say it. You have influence, and he will listen to you—and it will kill me if he breaks with his grandfather for the sake of that—woman! I believe the very sight of you would make him forget about that minx. Why, she is nearly as old as I am—besides her history!"

"I can have nothing to do with that, Lady Lucy," said

Patsy, who saw no way of refusing. "But if you like I will come and stay a day or two at Raincy House, since you are good enough to ask me. It is no use talking to Louis now. But perhaps we can manage in some other way. At any rate that is the best I can think of. At lunch I shall speak to Miss Aline and the Princess, and if you send the carriage for me this afternoon I shall be ready."

And the poor mother wept joyfully over her till Patsy's nice morning-gown hung about her all limp and bedripped.

"Thank you—thank you, dear," she said, when she had recovered a little of her voice; "I feel that my boy is saved."

"I can only do what I can, but remember, I am not going to be married offhand either to Louis or anybody else. However, I don't mind being the brave, bold Newfoundland dog, who swims in and saves poor Louis from the wicked jaws of the Arlington shark!"

CHAPTER XXIX

ENEMY'S COUNTRY

Duly Patsy found the pleasure of her company requested at Raincy House, a pleasant residence overlooking the Green Park, of which indeed, in the previous reign, the few tall trees of its garden had formed part. Occasionally, too, Louis continued to spend some time with Patsy, though less than formerly, till the evening of the great ball at Hertford House.

To this most fashionable event Patsy was going with the Lady Lucy for a chaperon. She had never been to any of the Regency set functions, and this was as much an affair of the Regent as if it had taken place at Carlton House.

The Princess Elsa could not go, or at least would not. But Prince Eitel had obtained an invitation through his embassy, and looked forward to a long evening of dancing and sitting out with Patsy. He argued, quite convincingly, that since Patsy was wholly unknown in Regency circles, she might expect to be left a good deal to herself. But his conclusion was wrong—first, because there were a good many, who like Louis de Raincy, had a foot in both camps, and for the others, especially such as had heard much talk of Patsy, the charm of the unknown and unexpected was strong.

Many were the young men, therefore, who forsook the trains of Mrs. Fitzherbert, of Miss Golding, Lady Bunyip, the Countess of Carment, and Mrs. Arlington herself to be introduced to Patsy. Louis himself was compelled, much against his will, to make some of these presentations. Captain Laurence, having incautiously admitted that he

had some slight acquaintance with the young beauty and her chaperon, found himself victimised by half a regiment at a time. Patsy soon had partners in plenty, and the Prince Eitel, who had looked forward to a pleasant tête-à-tête, retired to a corner from which he gloomed more and more murkily. He folded his arms and regarded the dancers with assassinating glances.

But Patsy wrote a hieroglyphic of her own before half-a-dozen of the dances, especially those just then coming into fashion, the waltz and the Bohemian polka *à deux temps*. Then, having assured her position, she began her struggle with the Arlington. She had never seen the lady before, and even now she did not find her antipathetic. Mrs. Arlington proved to be a big, blonde, jolly-looking woman, abundant in charms, with the easiest manner and the most laughing eyes in the room. She absolutely refused to let go her grip on youth. She must have been upon the outer confines of forty, yet her tint was as fresh and clear as it had been in her teens. Her hair was done in a froth of a myriad curls. She had ballooned her bust and hour-glassed her waist according to the fashion of the day. With her fan she beckoned this young man and that other out of the ranks of those collected about the door, and he came blushing, indeed, at the favour, and still more at its publicity, but all the same half-running with eager delight. She danced frequently, but did not seem to keep to any order or to have any written programme. She simply told one to go and another to come according to the accredited methods of the Roman centurion. Patsy noticed that Mrs. Arlington made no attempts to attract the older men to her side. The Royal Dukes, indeed, bowed over her hand, said a light word or two and then moved off with a slight smile and a certain air of satisfied complicity.

From all this it was evident that Mrs. Arlington was a woman of much more discernment and courage than Patsy had been given to expect. There was nothing of the jill-flirt about her. She treated the boys whom she drew

about her as if they had been her sons in need of scolding. She did not seek to hide her age. Indeed, she rather insisted upon it, and Patsy heard her bidding a young enthusiast to take himself off and do his duty to his girl cousins.

"When you have danced with them all, and got your toes duly trodden upon, come back and I shall see what I can do for you. Till then I have nothing to say to you. Surely you don't want me to have all the mammas hating me—there are some who look as if they could poniard me. Pray do look at that poor dear Lady Lucy. She slops over the seat as if somebody had opened the tap of a treacle-barrel and let her run out!"

But Mrs. Arlington, for all her loud good-nature, did not see without a pang the desertion of so many of her usual followers, and after she had seen Patsy beginning to dance, it suddenly became clear to her that she must do something to vindicate her rights of property.

"Louis," she said, in that most commanding tone which admitted of no reply, "go and speak to your mother. Then come straight back and dance with me. You have not been near the Lady Lucy to-night. And that I can't have!"

Louis obeyed, but as he made his way round the room he heard remarks which set him wild with anger and jealousy.

"They say he is quite mad about her!" said one.

"Don't they make a handsome couple?" "They are dancing the Hungarian Polka, the real one—it is easy to see that they have been practising it often before." "They say he is never away from Hanover Lodge!" "Oh, the Princess—why, of course she takes an interest in the girl because"—(and the rest was whispered into a carefully inclined ear).

"Louis, Louis," said his mother, taking his hand and keeping it between her two large soft palms, "do come and sit by us—don't go back to that odious woman. I can't think what you see in her. Though, indeed, 'tis

easy to see what she has been by the horridly familiar way in which the Dukes treat her. Oh, you will break my heart —besides you make your grandfather so angry ! "

For all the effect this homily of his mother produced on Louis Raincy, it might just as well never have been spoken. His eyes watched the smiling face of Mrs. Arlington as she whispered confidentially behind her hand to young Lord Lochend, a smooth-faced puppy whom Louis would like to have thrown out of the window. Then he gave his attention to the two who were dancing. They appeared so wrapped up in each other. The world was lost to them. Indeed, nearly every one else had stopped dancing to watch them. No doubt about it—these two were engaged. Patsy was soon to be a Princess. And with the curious mental blindness which causes a group of people to receive a tale, repeated by a sufficient number of mouths, as true, Patsy was considered already as good as married to Prince Eitel of Altschloss. Certain it was that they danced well together. Certain also that the two-time polka was the dance of the young man's native land. He must, therefore, have spent his time in teaching it to Patsy. The Princess, his neighbour, was of great influence with him. So the conclusion was clear—Patsy and he were to be married immediately, and in ten minutes from their first standing up, it was known what were to be the royal presents on the occasion, and the list of guests had been divulged, as well as the name of the officiating bishop.

Louis heard all this, and his eyes wandered no more to Mrs. Arlington. He thought of the seat in the niche of the beech-tree, the green and secret nest under the wall overlooking the path along which they could see Julian Wemyss pacing to and fro, his hands behind his back, and his eyes on the trout darting and swirling in the pools. Once more he scented the bog-myrtle and was the lad of the night rescue by the White Loch. Again Patsy was his Patsy, and he felt the sting of her hand, little and brown but very strong, on his smitten cheek. Ah, they were

good days, those—better than he had ever known since he came to London and donned the uniform of the Blue Dragoons. What a fool he had been!

He did not go back to Mrs. Arlington, but with an eagerness on his face, waited the moment when Patsy should be free. The dance ended. She was coming smilingly back to Lady Lucy. He had nothing to do but to wait.

But the Prince Eitel! He bowed. The Prince Eitel bowed, still radiant after the dance. He twirled his martial moustaches. He had heard from the Princess and others what Patsy had said of Louis Raincy, and considered himself quite at liberty to put on a conquering air which made him particularly hateful to the officer of dragoons.

The Prince said a few words to Lady Lucy, bowed and went away. He had asserted his first rights, and Patsy and he had covered themselves with glory. Mrs. Fitzherbert herself had seen and envied. The Regent had seen and been defied. Best of all, and what he knew would please the Princess most, Lyonesse had seen. "Gad, how happy he would be to stap a rapier through any one of these obese swine!" And Eitel of Altschloss stalked away glancing about him arrogantly, eager and wishful that any one of the Regency party should quarrel with him.

But only poor "Silly Billy" came lolloping up much like a pet rabbit, his cravat undone and his blue ribbon of the Garter slipped from his neck and hanging as low as his knee.

"Cousin," he said, laughing his innocent's giggle, "what do you think? My brother Clarence says that you have been dancing with a mightily pretty girl, but that Lyonesse led her a prettier dance than you! What did he mean, eh, cousin?"

"Go to your brothers, Clarence and Lyonesse, and tell them from me that they are damned, lying scoundrels, and that if they want a foot of steel through them, they have only to say as much in my hearing. Now say it over—don't forget."

The " natural " was delighted with his commission.

" No, Eitel, I shall tell them every word. I like you, Eitel. You never call me ' Silly Billy ' like the rest. If you *could* put some more swears in—I should like that still better ! "

" I am sorry I cannot oblige," said Prince Eitel, " but the one there is, will suffice if you shout it loud enough. Thank you, Duke ! that will do perfectly."

And the little man trotted off to deliver his message, jerking his arms and cracking his fingers with a real delight. It was not often that he got the chance of swearing at his brothers under the protection of Prince Eitel of Altschloss.

Meanwhile Louis Raincy had not been misusing his time. He knew he had come late in the day, and he was conscious of the queue of aspirants forming behind him.

At first Patsy listened with indifference, her eyes on the other side of the room and her chin in the air. She was so sorry, but she thought that of course Louis had all his arrangements made long before. She had seen him from the time they came in, yet while she was sitting beside his mother, he had never seen fit to come near them !

Whereupon Louis explained. He had been busy—the onerous duties of an attaché—and so forth.

Patsy kept him awhile on the tenterhooks. He went on to remind her of the burn of the Glen-wood. He described their nests in the beech-butt and under the shelter of the great march dyke. He would have spoken of the race across the moors and the rescue at the White Gates, save that by instinct he knew that her thoughts would at once be carried to Stair Garland, the man who *was* a man and as such had played the leading part on these occasions. He hated even to see the Duke of Lyonesse limp and to think that he had not even done *that* himself !

" Well, the one after next ! " said Patsy carelessly, after consulting the list of dances for those she had marked with her own hieroglyphic.

" Meanwhile, stay here with Lady Lucy till I am ready.

I am certainly not going to seek you up and down the ball-room."

This she said because she noticed that the Arlington was beginning to waft signals in the young man's direction with her fan. Therefore, before she took her next partner's arm, she saw Louis sit down beside his delighted mother, and talking to her in a manner so completely absorbed that he never so much as raised his eyes.

Patsy proved perfectly entrancing when it came to be Louis's turn to dance with her, but before the end of the music they dropped out, for Patsy said, "Now we shall climb the bank till we find our nook!"

And taking the young man's hand they ran nimbly up the stairs till they came to a dimly curtained recess which, if the truth must be told, Patsy had just vacated.

"Oh," said Louis, delighted, "you are as clever at finding hidie-holes in Hertford House as you used to be in the brows of the Abbey Water!"

"Draw the curtains closer," said Patsy, "or we shall have your Mrs. Arlington spying us out and carrying you off with a single wave of her fan. She reminds me of Circe—a fat, curly-wurly Circe—like that picture Uncle Ju brought back from Italy. *Why* do you run after her, Louis? I told you to go and make love to as many pretty girls as would let you, and here you go and break the tables of affinity by making love to your grandmother!"

At this Louis was vaguely offended—or perhaps rather hurt than offended. He had not come there to be lectured—at least not about Mrs. Arlington. But Patsy had the good sense to administer the cooling bitter medicine immediately after the waltz, when men are never quite themselves. She would give him time to get over it.

"I am not making love to Mrs. Arlington," he retorted abruptly.

"I should think not," said Patsy, as instantaneously. "As an officer and a gentleman I should hope that you know better what England expects of you—Patsy Ferris also. What does the man suppose he is here for, that he

should begin by telling me that? But seriously, Louis, you used to be always one to strike out new paths for yourself—why do you stick to the dusty highway—or, perhaps one might say in Mrs. Arlington's case, the old military road?"

"Patsy," said Louis, "*you* do not need to say things like that. You are too pretty. Mrs. Arlington is a kind woman, much spoken against and abominably maligned. Besides she is a great admirer of yours, and would give anything to be introduced to you! She told me so!"

Patsy whistled a mellow but mocking blackbird's note which very nearly brought the Duke of Kent and half-a-dozen of his compeers upon them. However, they passed on, in spite of royal instructions to "stop and search—some of these little she-vixens are signalling us!"

While the danger lasted, Patsy had gripped Louis by the wrist as she used to do in the woods when her uncle or some prowling gamekeeper went by. And the pressure of her fingers made his pulses fly. Patsy sighed, for she knew well that she was laying up wrath against herself, but for the present she disregarded the future. She was saving Louis, and in order to do this she must attach him to herself. It was a pity, of course, because it would inevitably lead to entanglements. Louis would blame her. Lady Lucy would blame her, and perhaps, at least till she had an occasion to explain, the Earl would also be angry. But of this last she was in no very deadly fear. Of all the explanations which fall to be made in this weary world, she found those with well-affected old gentlemen to be the easiest. And indeed, she was not very particular whether they were well-affected or not—that is, to begin with. The shikar was only the more interesting if the tiger growled and showed his teeth a bit at first.

Thereafter Patsy laid herself out to tease Louis, to bedazzle the poor boy's brain, and to reduce him to the state of drivelling incompetence induced by disobedience to the Arlington and dancing with herself. She went so far that Louis, filled with a spirit more heady than wine,

got down on his knees and was trying to make Patsy understand his undying devotion, when the curtain was pushed furiously aside and Mrs. Arlington appeared menacing in the brilliant illumination of the stairs. Behind, having no connection with her, but equally there on a mission of vengeance, loomed up the chubby giant, Prince Eitel of Altschloss.

"Ah, Prince," said Patsy, not in the least ruffled, "is it time for our dance already?"

"No," said the Prince austerely, "our dance was five or six back!"

Patsy glanced at her programme. She had carried it out to the very hieroglyph. All those dances which she had specially marked, she had sat out with Louis in the niche on the stairs. And now she did not mean to leave the spoil in the hands of the enemy.

She rose to her feet, shook out her skirts, and said, "Now, Louis, give me your arm and take me back to Lady Lucy. I don't think I shall dance any more to-night. You had better come with us to Raincy House! Good-night, Prince! I suppose we shall see you to-morrow!"

And so departed with the honours of war, leaving Eitel and Mrs. Arlington to console each other as best they might.

CHAPTER XXX

A CREDIT TO THE "GREEN DRAGON"

THE average riverine loafer about the Kew Waterfront, really a potential cheat, robber, and occasional murderer, looked upon the recent arrival at the "Green Dragon" as a prey specially destined by Providence for his necessities. He was never more completely mistaken. Kennedy McClure was, in the loafer's own language, "fly to the tricks of all wrong coves." Had he not held his own (and more) for thirty years in a hundred markets with horse-fakers and cattle-drovers? He did not "go after the lush"—still less "follow the molls." He never walked by the waterside by night, and on the one occasion when a rush had been tried as he strolled back in the twilight from Hanover Lodge, he had cracked Jem Simcoe's head so thoroughly, that there was little likelihood of its ever being much good to him in this world—a pretty thing for a man living by his wits and with a family of three or four young wives intermittently depending upon his efforts.

It was soon known that Mr. Kennedy McClure did not carry his money about with him. He had deposited his pocket book with the city correspondents of Sir William Forbes's bank, and now walked about with a light step, his blackthorn cudgel in his hand, and a glad light of battle in his eye.

"Tell me the day before your bill is due and I shall have the money," he said to the landlord of the "Green Dragon." And on the appointed morning a messenger from the city brought the amount, which Kennedy would open in the presence of Mr. Wormit himself, pay him, and send back the receipt to his correspondents in the city, thus gaining

the reputation of being a man who knew his way about, and making a devoted slave of the landlord, who liked all ready-money men as much as he hated all fools.

In this way, by the free speech of the admiring landlord of the "Green Dragon," whose words admitted of no reply, Kennedy McClure grew daily in honour and stature. To Mr. Wormit, himself no mean man, he had at first appeared as a mere pensioner on the bounty of the inhabitant of the royal Lodge. But he soon grew into the Superintendent of her Estates. He became "her confidential man"—"him as looks after her business." He ended by being the Princess's adviser on all her affairs, and in addition a mint of power and wisdom on his own account.

Had he not got the landlord's second son James Wormit into the Lodge gardens, where he had been appointed auxiliary to Miss Aline? Had he not, though declaring himself wholly ignorant of English law, furnished the hint which led to the favourable settlement of the long-disputed case of H. M. Excise Board *versus* Wormit? Altogether a wonderful man, the landlord declared Kennedy to be, and a credit to the house any way you looked at it.

He knew a thing or two, he did. Would he have all these sailor-men from the docks sent to take their orders from him every day or two if he were an ordinary country gull? Would the young lady from the Lodge—she who went to the Court at Windsor, and drove out with the Princess—be walking all the way back with him if he were a nobody? And no fool either—carried just enough money to get him a bit to eat and a pint, when he wanted them—while there was that great oaf Jem Simcoe lying with his broken head which he was fool enough to trust within reach of such a man's cudgel. "Sarve him right," said Mr. Wormit. If Jem had known what Mr. Wormit knew, or a tenth part of it, he would have made sure that he had not the ghost of a chance with such a man.

So Kennedy and his dangling cowries, his corded kerseymere shorts, his blue knitted hose and silver buckles, had honour in Loafer Land, and every hulking rascal who

carried the pattern of the ornamental wrought-iron posts at the gates of the "Green Dragon" yard permanently imprinted in the small of his back, swore by him just as much as did Wormit the landlord. They saluted him as he went to and fro. They pulled forelocks and touched caps, feeling elated when the great man growled at them and ordered them by his gods to get out of his way. They knew how a gentleman ought to speak, and (though the accent was a little peculiar) Kennedy McClure's way was that way.

And during these spring weeks there is no doubt that the landlord had a great deal of reason for his opinion of his guest. Kennedy went every day to the Lodge. He arrived there early and Patsy met him, equipped for a walk, rain or shine, sleet or brooding river-fog—it made no matter to Patsy.

The two set off into the park, where they talked for a couple of hours—indeed till the approach of the luncheon hour warned them that the Princess, having descended, might be expected to miss her young companion. Patsy clung to the old man's sturdy arm, and certainly Kennedy's bachelor heart beat the kindlier, if not the faster, for the pressure. He was a most reassuring confidant and never took a hopeless view of anything.

"There's more ways o' killing a cat than choking her wi' cream!" he was in the habit of saying. "The craw doesna' bigg his nest wi' yae strae!" "It tak's mair than a score o' yowes to stock a muir!" "Bide a while—God made a' thing for something—even lasses!"

Nevertheless these were hard days for Patsy. Life at the Lodge was becoming extremely complex. Prince Eitel in his pervading way took a great deal too much for granted. He had received a letter from her Uncle Julian giving him every encouragement, and as he had not heard from her father, he was meditating a ride to the North along with his cousin of Thurn-and-Taxis in order to present to the Laird of Cairn Ferris a demand for Patsy's hand in accordance with the due forms of protocole.

Then Louis had forsaken the Arlington even as his

mother had hoped. But, just as Patsy had foreseen, he now followed her rather more closely than her shadow. It was only in the early mornings, in company with Kennedy McClure, that she could escape from her wooers. She had Louis in the afternoon, telling her by the hour the tale of his fidelity and of all he had done, was doing, and was going to do for her.

Then would come Prince Eitel, when at sight of Louis Raincy the blonde hairs of his moustache would bristle like those of an angry cat, while Louis glowered a more sullen defiance. Only Miss Aline managed to stave off the storm, but even with her shepherding of the elements, it was bound to break one day or another.

Louis was never asked to dinner, so he had perforce to take himself ungraciously off, leaving his rival in possession of the field. Not that that did Eitel much good, for the Princess declined to accept of a man in love as a whist partner. She chose instead Miss Aline, who had the gleg eye of the old maid, and a memory sharpened with forty years of "knowing jeely pots by head mark."

Prince Eitel and Patsy lost regularly, sometimes as much as one-and-sixpence on an evening's play, which sent the Princess to bed a happy woman.

Besides, there began to be primroses on the Thames waterside, the sight of which made Patsy cry, and in the gardens a wealth of yellow and blue blossoms began to push up, the blue nestling under the shadows, and the yellow coming boldly out even in the filtered warmth of the spring sunshine, when the east winds blew the smoke of the city far up the river.

Then Patsy had visions. Patsy dreamed dreams—such dreams, visions glorious—thirty miles of Solway swept clean of mist, great over-riding white clouds, crenellated and victorious—the Atlantic thundering on the Back Shore, and all the tides of the North Channel tearing past. She saw the Twin Valleys awakening—a marvel she had never yet missed—the sheltered blooms and shy crozier-headed ferns deep in the trough of the Abbey Burn, the wilder,

vaster spaces of broom and gorse, the windflower and hyacinth in the woods and sheltered spaces of the Glenanmays Water! Ah, she knew where to look for every one.—And merely not to be there, made her heart turn to water within her.

And then all of them tearing at her—she must do this—she must promise that! If they would only let her alone. She did not want to marry Eitel. She got tired of him after half-an-hour. She only really liked him when he was talking about the wars, and Louis—what a nuisance he was becoming! She began to hate the innocent Princess, who for Julian's sake was doing everything for her, and she even grew silent with poor Miss Aline, shutting herself up more and more within herself. Oh, she was sick of everything. Was ever a girl so unhappy?

For which causes and reasons, seemingly quite insufficient to any one but Patsy, she was escaping every day to plot black treason with Kennedy McClure, whenever that worthy old gentleman was not either at Barnet Fair or Smithfield Market, the only two places in London which had any interest for him.

And of course, at this critical moment, there arrived the cataclysmic letter from Stair.

"The Bothy was attacked and surrounded last night. We can hold out for at least a week!

"STAIR."

. . . . . .

Then everything grew dazed about her—Hanover Lodge and the Princess, the empty phantasmagoria of courts, balls and routs, the disputes and reconciliations of royal Dukes, Louis and his half-cured amours with the Arlington. What did all these things matter? Perhaps at that very moment the Bothy had been taken by storm, and Patsy's quick mind saw Stair and her Uncle Julian lying dead out on the face of the moor, the soldiers who had done the work having no time for even a peat-hag burial.

But Kennedy McClure was a strong tower. If he were affected by the message he certainly did not show it.

"Hoots, lass," he said, patting her shoulder, "greetin' does no good. Come wi' me the morn in the *Good Intent*. That will be three tides before her regular sailing date, but I ken Captain Penman. He is under some obligations to me, and the *Good Intent*—weel, she's maistly my ain. But though ye canna speak to the Princess, ye had better tell Miss Aline. Being Gallowa-born and Gallowa-bred, she will understand and speak for ye to the Princess."

Patsy promised, though reluctantly, to do what was necessary in Miss Aline's case. It was monstrous and hateful to her that she should need to go back to Hanover Lodge at all. But she recognised that Kennedy McClure was likely to be right, and as she was only anticipating by a few weeks what she meant to do ever since she had begun to talk with the Laird of Supsorrow, she resolved to interview Miss Aline instantly.

Miss Aline also had her own reasons for being wearied of Hanover Lodge. It "wasna' her ain country" and the "fremit folk (especially the 'flonkies') vexed her sair!" Thus from the first there was no question of her letting Patsy go back alone.

"Fegs, no," she cried, "what do ye tak' me for? Lassie, do ye not ken that I am here for the purpose o' lookin' after you—little as I have been able to accomplish, with you as flichty as the Wemysses and as dour as the Ferrises. It is the Lord's ain pe'ety that ye werena' born reasonable and wise like the Mintos——!"

"And your grandfather——" Patsy suggested, "him they call Hellfire Minto—what was it he did to the poor man at Falkirk Tryst?"

"He wasna' a poor man—he was the chief o' a neibour clan and the twa were at feud. It was that sent my granther doon to Galloway where there are no clans nor ony spites that last for twenty generations. But no matter for that. We are wasting time. Let us go and see the Princess. What for should we steal away like a thief in the night—after all her kindness, when we can get her Godspeed by the asking."

" She will try to stop us—tell her nothing ! " cried Patsy, instantly fearful lest she should be locked up, or by some machination prevented from joining the *Good Intent.*

" And if ye please, Patsy Ferris, wha' may it be that is in danger at the Bothy o' Blairmore ? "

" Why, Stair Garland, of course ! "

" And wha' else ? "

" I suppose my Uncle Julian is," said Patsy, seeing Miss Aline's point, " but he is not in real danger like Stair."

" Not perhaps it if comes to a trial, but suppose that the sodjers have orders not to let it come to a trial——! "

" Oh, Miss Aline, do you mean that they would kill them on the spot ? "

" Weel, lass, Stair and Mr. Julian will doubtless be defending theirsel's, and what is to hinder a musket or so from going off behind their backs. There will be a reward oot and Brown Bess is tricky at the best of times. I am judgin' that the Princess will rather be for coming with us than for standing in our road ! "

Miss Aline judged well. The Princess was anxious that they should take half-a-dozen of her retainers who had served in the wars, but Miss Aline pointed out that their ignorance of the country and language would make them only a danger. Finally, however, they agreed to take Heinrich Wolf, called the Silent, a lean, keen-profiled man of fifty, who had been a famous tracker of bear and boar in the Austrian Alps, and in his youth an expert in contraband of no mean fame, and of large experience both on mountain and on sea.

The thought of Julian's danger threw the Princess into a flurry of nervous fever, so that she could get no rest till she saw their boxes packed—each being allowed but one because of the difficulties of a secret landing. The others were to be sent to the care of Eelen Young at Ladykirk.

At first it was not clear to the Princess what they would do to help the besieged when they got there, but Miss Aline assured her that if any one could possibly raise the country and save the situation, that person was Patsy and no other.

Old Silent Wolf took with him a couple of great Jaeger "ruk-sacks," full of sausages, together with much ammunition for rifle and pistol. These he nursed as he waited in the hall with a grim expression on his countenance, but as composedly as if he had only come in to report on the possible game for the day's shooting.

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CHAPTER XXXI

THE NIGHT LANDING

It was the gloaming of a late March day when the reefed top-sails of the *Good Intent* showed up against the horizon of bleak slate grey which was the Irish Sea. The North Channel foamed boisterously to the left, heaping many waters together, a perpetual cave of the winds, a play-ground for errant tides, or rather, as the folk on its shores say, the meeting-place of all the Seven Seas.

From early morning they had been standing off, not daring to approach nearer till assisted by the westward rush of the Solway tides and the darkness which would hide everything. Captain Penman was a man of few words, and these few he did not waste. Inwardly he was boiling over at the ill-luck of his first spring run. He cursed Stair Garland and Julian Wemyss for mixing private quarrels with so sacred a mission as that of hoodwinking his Majesty's Customs.

"As good a cargo as ever came past the Point of Ayre," he grumbled, "and if young Garland had been attending to his business, we might have run it at the Mays Water as easy as changing money from one trouser's pocket to the other. But now I must put these people on shore with the whole countryside humming with Preventives, and as like as not a brig-o'-war hovering about. There always is, when soldiers take a hand. The authorities get into a flurry and order up everything that can carry a gun. I shall have to make for Balcary or that narrow shingly cur's hole of a Portowarren, where a ship can't turn between the Boreland heuchs and the reefs of Port Ling. Then there are never enough boats there, and three tides will not serve to clear her. Why could not Kennedy McClure mind

his business, which is also my business? He has been witched, as if he were only twenty, by this lass of Adam Ferris's. And the more shame to him that has passed sixty without ever a chick or a child to hamper him, or a petticoat to drag him to church o' Sundays!"

Yet for all his abuse this close-lipped captain of the *Good Intent* allowed Patsy many favours. She was often beside him on the bridge, and the Captain would explain to her quite patiently why they were hanging off and on, when the cliffs of the Back Shore were clearly visible, and for a little while even she could make out through the glass the twin rifts of the Valleys of Abbey Burnfoot and the Mays Water.

"Ye see, bairn," Captain Penman would say, "we can see nothing at all of what is going on ashore, while to a Preventive man up on the heuchs yonder with a spyglass, we are as plain to be seen as a fly on white paper. I changed her rigging about a bit in the winter months, but for all that there is something about the auld *Good Intent* that makes her as easy to be told as the well-weathered brick-red of a sea-going face on shore!"

But of course Patsy was eager and impatient. She was hard to be held.

"If it is of your cargo you are thinking, why not go straight in and land us? Then you can take your tea and lace and brandy further on."

Captain Penman looked at the girl beside him, and was sorry for her disappointment.

"I would if I could, Mistress Patsy, but they would only grip the whole of you the moment you stepped on shore. Then that rough-haired rascal with the armoury in his belt would loose off half-a-dozen shots before they got him mastered, that would send you all straight to prison. And that's no place for them that want to help their friends in trouble. Besides, there are King's ships about, and who knows whether the wind may hold? If it dropped, we should be taken—all the lot of us, and the *Good Intent* with her fine winter's cargo would be made a gauger's prize!

No, bairn, we are better biding here till the dark of the night comes and then—we shall see where we can set you ashore !"

" Weel, Captain," interrupted Kennedy McClure, who had come up from below, " what think ye of the landing ? Can we make the auld place within the bight of the Mays Water ? That would be the nearest to the Bothy on the Wild o' Blairmore ! "

" Maybe," said the Captain, grimly, " but being the nearest is not to say the safest. They will have a cordon o' marines and, what is far worse, maybe blue-jackets on the look-out. Sodjers and Preventives do not matter so muckle. For at night the sodjers canna see onything, and the Preventives are apt to be lookin' the ither road."

" Ye think, then, that we had better try the Burnfoot ? "

" I think nothing," said Captain Penman, irritably, " I am here to sail my ship according to your orders. But I will take nothing to do with what may happen after you set your foot on shore."

" Na, then, wha was thinkin' itherwise ? " said Kennedy McClure, soothingly, " but surely a word o' advice is worth having from siccan an auld hand as you ! "

" If I were you, then," said the Captain, instantly mollified, " I should e'en keep the lower side o' the Abbey Water, away from the Wild. Even if the red-coats have caged the mice, they are sure to have reset the trap—and great fools would ye be to walk straight into it ! "

. . . . . .

As soon as it was dark enough, Captain Penman let his vessel drift landward with the tide, then running strong into the wide swallow of the Solway. The wind was light, and a jib was sufficient to give her steerage-way. It was intended that the passengers should be set on shore at a point nearly opposite to Julian Wemyss's house, where a spit of sand and the shoulder of cliff formed a neat little anchorage. The sailors of the *Good Intent*, accustomed to the work, were ordered to convey the little luggage they had brought with them from London to the nearest " hidie-hole " known to Kennedy McClure, where, if all went well,

men from Supsorrow could easily dig them up and carry them to their owners.

Attempts were made to signal as the *Good Intent* glided along the coast, but all remained obstinately dark. Dark lay Glenanmays at the head of the wide Mays Water. The cliffs of the Wild sent back no answering flashes, and it was not till the *Good Intent* was well-nigh abreast of the Partan Craig that a faint light glimmered out, low down by the edge of the water. . . . *Flash—flash—flash*—(it went, and then darkness. *Flash—flash—flash*—each double the duration of the first. Then came the blackness of darkness again, and anon half-a-dozen swift needle-points of light chasing one another as quickly as the eye could register them.

"*There is danger . . . to the north—keep farther away!*" Captain Penman read off the coded message. "That's one of our folk. At any rate they are not all hanged!"

When they reached the next bay to the south the whale-boat was manned, and Miss Aline first, and then Patsy, were carefully handed down. After them came Kennedy McClure, cursing his own weight and the rope which had scorched his hands, last of all old huntsman Wolf scrambled down, bags of ammunition and all, as alert as a monkey, his rifle slung over his shoulder and his jaeger's feather stuck rakishly in his green Tyrolean hat.

The men hardly dipped their oars into the water. The mate, Rob Blair from Garlieston, a dark, hooknosed springald as strong as a horse, sat in the stern and steered, directing the men in whispers. Presently they entered into a purple gloom, and the stars were shut out over a full half of the heavens. On shore and quite near, the lantern flickered six times as swiftly as before.

"Still further to the south!" it said. "Hang the fellow, he will bring us up among the Port Patrick fishing-boats! Ah, there!"

Out of the loom of the land as the current swept them under the cliffs, came one long, steady flare—then a pause, which was followed by a second.

"Head in, men," said Rob Blair, laying his weight on the tiller, "the fellow on shore says that all is safe, which may be and again it may not! There is that devil of a nephew of yours, Spy McClure from Stoneykirk. They say he is still at large. If he has sold us to the land-sharks, it is the last Judas-money he will touch. I know ten men in Garlieston who will see to that!"

"Attend to your own business, mate," growled Kennedy McClure, "I will be answerable for my nephew."

"That's more than I should care to undertake," said the blackbrowed, free-tongued Garliestonian. "'Tis no sort of a hearty welcome ye will get at the Last Day when ye face the Throne, if ye have such a wastrel's sins to answer for."

"Silence!" said Kennedy. "We are close in and we shall see in a minute. You, foreigner, if I tell you to shoot —*shoot*—but not before!"

Patsy could just see the jaeger's teeth bared in a permanent grin.

"Steady there, men! Back-water! Now, you with the lantern, let us have your name."

"Francis Airie," a voice called out of the darkness.

"Francis Airie—don't know him. Heads low, men—ready there to go about. I never heard of Francis Airie. He is none of ours. Hold on, not so fast, you Austrian, sight your man before you fire!"

"I see him very well in the dark—shall I let off so he dead be?"

"I am Francis Airie, called the Poor Scholar," said the voice; "Miss Patsy Ferris knows me, and Mr. Kennedy also!"

"Of course I do," said Patsy, recognising the voice of the lad who had helped her with many a hard line of Virgil, and many a passage of Tacitus, in which the verbs were singularly thin-sown. "Is it safe to come in where you are, Francis?"

"Quite, Miss Ferris," said the voice. "They have got Stair and Mr. Wemyss cornered in the Bothy, but they are

still holding out. Fergus and Agnew are away on the cliffs to the north, but they are too closely watched to venture a signal. So that is why I am here to meet you."

With a long, even glide the boat's keel touched soft sand.

"Steady now, men,—back her a little!" said the mate, who was afraid of being caught on an ebbing tide, "overboard with you, Lambert, and you McVane, and help the ladies ashore."

But a pair of strong arms came over the side and grasped Patsy.

"No need," said the Poor Scholar, "I know exactly where to land and——"

"Take Miss Aline first!" commanded Patsy, "think of the pious Æneas you used to preach to me about."

And she got herself carried ashore by the hirsute giant McVane.

"'Seniores priores' would have been a better quotation," said the Scholar, as he took up Miss Aline, "take hold of the lapels of my coat, Miss Aline—your arms not so close about my neck, if you please!"

"I doubt if you would have objected to the arms about your neck if they had been Patsy's, you and your 'Seniores'!" Miss Aline observed rather tartly as she was borne off. They were soon all safe in a tiny cove, their feet on the pleasant wet sand, and the dark undefined shapes of the crags overhanging them on every side. A moment more and the boat disappeared into the darkness. A lantern flashed and was answered. They were free to proceed on their quest. Francis the Scholar led them carefully above tide-mark, turned at right-angles into a still deeper darkness, bade them keep their heads low, and with Patsy's hand in his passed into a cave-shelter, in one corner of which the embers of his watch-fire still smouldered red. Francis threw a handful of pine-cones upon the fire. It blazed up instantly with a clear light and a fragrant odour, and the four night-voyagers looked at each other, wondering at the wild eyes and haggard faces which they saw.

One corner of the cavern had been roughly screened off with sacking, and within was a comfortable couch of broom and heather twigs, upon which Miss Aline was advised to lie down. But this she refused emphatically to do.

"And me as near to my ain decent house at Ladykirk," she said, "what for should I do such a thing?"

"Because," said the Poor Scholar, "I have much to tell you, much you must hear, and you will not see Ladykirk this night. In fact you could not, without betraying the secrets of those who have been depending upon your aid."

"Say on, then," quoth Miss Aline, "the Minto's are no tale-pyets, and that ye shall ken. Let us hear what ye hae to say, laddie! Ye will be Nicholas Airie's gyte—I kenned her when she was dairy lass up at the Folds and mony is the time I warned her—but there's nae use harkin' back on the things noo, and when a' is said and dune ye carried me nane so ill, though the deil flee awa' wi you and your 'Seniores'!—I would have you know that the day has been when I was as young—I am no sayin' sae bonnie or sae flichertsome as Miss Patsy there—but still weel eneuch and young eneuch. 'Seniores,' indeed, and you thinkin' I wad not tak' your meaning! Faith, I hae wasted my time ower Ruddiman's Ruddiments as well as the best o' them."

CHAPTER XXXII

ORDEAL BY FIRE

THE Bothy on the Wild of Blairmore was an entrenched camp, for Stair was too good a general not to see to the state of his defences, to his victualling and armament from the beginning. So, though the moment of the attack was a surprise, its manner had long been foreseen. As Stair had repeatedly said, "The sea is never shut!"

Landing parties from the *Britomart* and *Vandeleur* had marched up the Valleys, and the Preventive men of all the West of Galloway had quietly gathered at Stranryan in order to co-operate with them.

It was Stair who stumbled upon a picket of the *Britomart* men hidden among the eastern sand-dunes. He was on his way to meet Joseph, Whitefoot as usual at his heels, when suddenly the dog sprang forward, eyes blazing, hackles stiff, his nose high in the air, and his teeth bared, ready to bound. Stair restrained him and crept to the lip of a little sandy cup where, from the midst of a clump of dry saw-edged sea-grass, he could look down on a group of men busied about their soup-kettle.

"Silly fools," he muttered to himself, "they do not know that the first handful of heather and dried bracken they throw on their fire, will send a skarrow to the sky that will warn every soul within twenty miles. If I had not been a blind idiot, and thinking of something else, I should have seen it long before I came so far."

And looking over his shoulder he saw to the right, to the left, and behind him towards the cliffs seaward, multitudinous pulsing ruddy camp-fire blooms, waking, waxing and falling, that told of a general investment of their

fastness, so long secure. In spite of the surprise, however, Stair managed to meet Joseph and to warn him that nothing further must be attempted except by means of Whitefoot. He introduced the wise collie and made him give his two front paws to the confidential servant in token of amity, while he repeated his name over and over again—"Joseph! Joseph!"

"*Ao-ouch!*" whispered Whitefoot, as much as to say, "Of course I understand! Do you think that I, Whitefoot Garland, am some silly puppy gambolling through life?"

For Whitefoot was a grave dog and had had to do with many very serious things indeed—things which touched even the life of his master. So it is no wonder that at this time of day he rather resented pains being taken with his education. It was like setting a double-first to construe the first book of Cæsar.

Stair returned to the Bothy with his heart heavy and many thoughts churning within him. He reached the Wild safely with nothing worse to report than the fact that he was fired upon by a sentry, which warned him that he must not come that way too often. He did not enter directly into the Bothy, where, as he knew, Julian Wemyss would be doing an hour's reading before turning in. Instead he betook himself to the dam which his brothers and the band had constructed at the close of the autumnal peat-leading.

All the winter the *Sunk* of Blairmore had been full of black moss water. For the greater part of the cold weather it had been frozen and snow-bound. But now, swollen with spring rains, the ditches of the *Sunk* were lipping to the overflow. Stair took the great iron gelleck and with a blow or two knocked back the clutches of the flood-barriers. Then flinging down the huge crow-bar, he fled for his life, the ink-black water hissing and spurting at his heels. It was not noisy, that water. It ran silently, almost oilily, but all the same it followed after, and it was swirling black about Stair Garland's knees as he

scrambled up the high platform of the Bothy, at the place where you could dig out the sand and sea-shells of a past age from among the roots of the heather.

"That will put out one or two of their fires for them!" he exclaimed triumphantly, and even as he spoke he heard cries announcing danger, hasty preparations for flight, while the red "skarrows" in the sky winked only once or twice more and were then wiped out clean all along the east and west borders of the Wild. Only on the high southern cliffs the fires still shone. And Stair knew that it was thither that the drowned-out investing parties would be compelled to retreat.

From the north there came no sign, for there alone no fires had been lighted. But the Wild spread the farthest and was most dangerous and inaccessible in that direction. Only morning would reveal the solitary tiny zig-zag of path which connected them with their fellows, a path which Stair believed to be quite impossible—*unless*—and here a suspicion went flashing through his mind which sent him indoors with a bound. No, Eben the Spy was lying on his bed apparently sound asleep.

Stair gazed at him with a bitter smile.

"That's what comes of having a bad record against you," he murmured, "the man may be quite innocent. He may be really asleep. Yet as things are I dare not treat him as if he were either. To-morrow he must do a little scouting for us. He shall feel for the enemy, and if they fire upon him—well and good, then he has not brought the enemy down upon us. But because of his past, he must undergo the ordeal by fire and water.

"Well, we will let him sleep, but all the same I shall keep an eye upon him to see that he does not take French leave during the night!"

Stair called Mr. Wemyss from his reading. The ex-ambassador thought that a new parcel of books had arrived, and made haste to obey. He saw the door of the Bothy open and Stair, a large, dark shape vaguely outlined against a rosy illumination, the cause of which he did not

understand, leaning easily with his shoulder against the lintel-post, blocking all exit.

"Well, Stair," said Julian, "did you find Joseph? Had he any word of the *Good Intent?*"

"I did find Joseph," said Stair curtly, "and it will be a long time before I find him again. Do you see that?"

"That" referred to the numerous fires which were now being lighted on the heights of the sand-hills, by the fugitives from the camps in the hollows of the Wild, who had been driven out by the invading waters of the dam constructed by the Garland brothers and their followers.

Julian Wemyss gazed a little stupidly. His eyes were unaccustomed to the dark, and he blinked like one who finds a difficulty in believing the evidence of his senses.

"Are these really fires?" he asked, covering his eyes with his hand.

Stair softly shut the door behind the two of them. It would not now matter whether the spy were asleep or awake.

"Now do you understand?" he said softly.

"They are fires, and we are surrounded by water. You have let out the dam!"

Stair sketched his night's adventure, with his hand on Whitefoot's head, who sat staring out at the winking fires gravely and wisely, as one who knew all about it and would have a great deal to say to the matter before all was done.

"Ah," said Julian Wemyss, "this is no chance business."

They have been preparing it with the long hand. But why did they not charge from all sides at once and so rush the Bothy?"

"They could not," said Stair simply, "of course there were three easy paths then where there is only one very difficult one now. But, you see, they did not know that. They did not know and they do not know the strength of our garrison, or how soon we hope to be reinforced."

"I suppose," Julian whispered, "you have every con-

fidence——?" And he indicated the interior of the Bothy where the ex-spy was sleeping.

"No," murmured Stair, "but I shall be sure to-morrow as soon as the sun is up. Possible treachery within the camp is not the sort of thing one can afford to let drag!"

"Provisions?" queried Julian.

"For a year!" said Stair.

"Water?"

"As you see!" And he swept his arm largely round the circle of the Wild. "We shall make a filter with a little granite sand (silver sand they call it). After passing it two or three times through this, the peat water will be fairly palatable. At least we shall need to put up with it!" And then Stair communicated to his fellow-prisoner his idea of the defence of the Bothy.

"We do not want to kill any of these men who have been ordered to come and starve us out," he said. "You have your house and your position. It is true that you have killed Lord Wargrove, but if he had not been a friend of the Regent and a confidant of Lyonesse, you might have walked the streets of London after a month or so, and no man would have dreamed of disquieting you. I am in a wholly different case. They are eager to see me hanged, and would not hesitate to make it high treason——"

"High treason only affects the person of the King," said Julian Wemyss, "not that that will help matters much, the Regent's judges being what they are."

"At any rate," said Stair, "killing a blue-jacket or an exciseman will do us no good, and I am for firing blanks except in the very last extremity—of course, if it is our life or that of another man, I think we owe it to ourselves to see that the funeral is the other fellow's!"

Stair Garland slept that night outside, wrapped in his plaid, with Whitefoot crouched in the corner of it. The watcher's back was against the door of the Bothy, the key of which was in his pocket. He was taking care that his ex-spy did not take it into his head to escape the ordeal of the morning.

At daybreak Stair rose to his feet and shook himself comprehensively. His limbs were stiff with the cold and damp. Whitefoot had been alert most of the night. He was unquiet and whined occasionally to himself, but very softly. The fires on the sand-dunes agitated him—perhaps also the unrest of his master, who with his own comfortable bed within a dozen yards, had chosen so incommodious a way of spending the night. Every few minutes Whitefoot aroused himself and paced stealthily round the little hut, his head in the air, sniffing the four winds for information. He tried the black lipping water with his paw and shook it dry again. That also he did not understand. However, he believed that Stair Garland did. The knowledge comforted him and sent him back to the nook of his master's plaid, where he nestled down without turning round, which was perhaps the most wonderful accomplishment of this wonderful dog.

. . . . . .

Whether Eben McClure, ex-superintendent of recruitment and common informer, slept well or not during the first night of the investing of the Bothy of the Wild, is known only to himself. He at least pretended to pass an excellent night. The pretence was forced upon him by Stair Garland camping outside, his rifle ready to his hand, and the ceaseless patter of Whitefoot's alert sentry-go going round and round the hut.

By half-past five the day was beginning to come. Stair entered the Bothy, shook Eben by the shoulder and bade him prepare breakfast. Meals must now be taken as occasion served, and the whole business of their daily life would have to be reorganised. For they were now a city in a state of siege.

Eben knew too well the conditions of his life's tenure, to refuse to do anything Stair Garland bade him. He believed that while in the company of any of the band, he existed only by suffrance and had reason to be grateful for each hour of life vouchsafed to him.

So he made the porridge without demur, just as he had

gone to bed fully dressed so as to be ready for any demand that the night might bring.

The meal being properly stirred, the porridge was poured into three wooden platters. Then Stair took a lump of fine Glenanmays salt butter from the firkin and dabbed it into the centre of each dish, the same amount for each. After which he went and knocked on the thin partition of Julian Wemyss's cubicle. Mr. Wemyss was already on foot, and had, in fact, almost finished the elaborate toilette which was habitual to him.

He saluted Stair and the spy with his usual calm civility, and with one glance at the stained, "up-all-night" look of Stair's dress, he gathered the truth. Stair Garland had been watching while he slept. He blushed a little at the thought, and resolved that for the future he would do his full share of night duty. Nay, even to-day he would see to it that Stair got his proper hours of repose. In the meantime, however, Stair's mind was full of quite another matter.

The loyalty of Eben McClure must be tested, and Stair was only waiting for the end of the meal in order to instruct the victim how he was to prove it. The door was open and Eben sat on the inner side of the table facing it. Between him and the light were Stair Garland and Stair Garland's gun. As usual Mr. Wemyss sat at the end of the table nearest to the fire.

"Eben," said Stair Garland, setting his elbows squarely on the table and leaning forward, "you are an intelligent man and you will understand that since the Bothy has been surrounded by an armed force and we may expect an assault any hour, your position has very much changed. We took you, to a very great extent, on your own statement. Now I do not think that you have sold us, or that you have brought these people down upon us. But we need to be sure. It will be obvious to you that if we are to depend on a third man in our midst, that third man must have all our confidence. Now, this is what I intend that you shall do. You and I shall follow the path as far as

the big peat knoll. There we shall be in full view of the posts of the Preventive men. Having arrived there, you will appear to break from me after a struggle, and run as hard as you can towards the north in the direction of the excisemen. They will know you very well, having been your old cronies. You will have a white handkerchief in your hand which you will wave to them. If they take that signal to mean that you are escaping, we on our side will understand that you have been at your old tricks. If they fire—then you are cleared and can turn and come back to us. I will protect your retreat. Now do you quite understand ? "

Frequently in the exercise of his profession, Eben had need of indomitable courage, but now perhaps more than ever. Yet he was steadfast.

" I see no reason why you should trust me," he said, " I am willing to take the risk. When shall we start ? "

" Now," said Stair, and in a minute more he was marching his man along the narrowing pathway between the dark pools of peat water. " There is only one thing I have to say. Do not pass the dwarf thorn-tree at the big elbow. If you run past that, I shall know you have it in your mind to desert, and it will be my duty to shoot. You know I do not miss."

It was a grey day with a gentle wind, the sky of a teased pearl wooliness with curious warm tints in it here and there. The face of the moorland was generally black, sometimes broken by borders of vivid green about the pools, and along the path edges by the little rosy rootlets of the plant called Venus's Flytrap.

They came to the outlying peat knoll, where an extra supply of fuel had been left under shelter during the previous autumn. Quite half of it still remained, and the " fause-hoose " or cavernous pit left from the digging out of the peats, afforded the best of cover. From it Stair would be able to follow the spy with his rifle all the way to the posts of the Preventive men which had been established on the rising ground above the edge of the Wild.

A portable semaphore stiffly flapped its arms as they looked, no doubt signalling their coming to other and more distant posts.

"There," said Stair, "they are all ready for you. Come outside and let us get our bit of a trial over. There is your handkerchief. As soon as you hear the bullets whistle, you can drop. Then turn about and crawl back to me."

"It does not seem to you somewhat cruel—this test?" said Eben McClure, looking wistfully at Stair. It was his only sign of weakness, and there are few who would have shown so little.

"No," said Stair, sternly, "when I think of those lads beaten insensible in the military prisons of your dépôts or bleeding at the triangles—they gave Craig Easton a thousand lashes and he had had eight hundred of them before he died—I think I am letting you off easy. I ought to shoot you myself where you stand. And don't let me think too much about it or I may do it even yet. I am giving you your chance to be an honest man!"

They went together out into the open. Before them a little zig-zag of pathway angled intricately among the sullen floods of the morass. The sky was pleasantly shell-tinted overhead. There was the way he must go. Never had life appeared so sweet to the spy.

But he went through his part like a man in a dream. He struggled with Stair Garland, and though he did not hear himself he shouted fiercely as if for life. It was very real indeed. Then suddenly he broke loose and ran down the narrow towpath of dry land between the ink-black pools. He was still shouting. He had forgotten to wave the handkerchief. Then suddenly before him he saw the thorn at the angle of the big elbow.

He longed for the rattle of muskets—either from before or behind. It did not seem to matter much to him now which it was to be. He felt desperate and forlorn, hating everybody—Stair Garland most of all.

"*Hist—Skip! Crackle!*" came a volley from far

away to the north, and Eben cast himself down behind a heather bush to draw breath. They had fired, and he was a proven man. He had faced death to certify his truth to the salt he was eating, and now nothing remained but to withdraw as carefully as might be. He crawled backward, now scuttling from one little rickle of peats left forlornly out on the moor to the next sodden whin bush, the prickles of which yirked him as he threw himself down. Stair kept his word, and from his peatstack delivered a lively fire upon the men in the shelters on the northern hillsides.

Eben was very white when he came back and dropped limp among the peat. Stair said nothing, but for the first time he held out his hand. The spy had become a clean man again, and the same would be known from among all the folk from Nith Brig to the heuchs of the Back Shore of Leswalt. His kin would own him openly. Stoneykirk parish was again free to him. Eben knew that he had not paid too dearly for his rehabilitation, for whatever the dangers he had faced or might be called upon to face, they were as nothing to the hate and opprobium of the whole body of one's own people.

CHAPTER XXXIII

PATSY RAISES THE COUNTRY

With three Galloway ponies and the contagion of her own enthusiasm Patsy undertook to arouse the country. She would save Stair and Julian by raising the siege of the Bothy on the Wild of Blairmore. She called upon her father at the gloomy house of Cairn Ferris and explained to him what she meant to do. She would not remain there in the meanwhile, but if he would lend her a pony or two, either from his stable or from among those running wild on the moors, she would not compromise him in any way.

"Whom, then, did she mean to compromise?" Her father put the question patiently.

Oh, Kennedy McClure was helping her, and Frank Airie, the Poor Scholar, and the Glenanmays lads—all the Stair Garland band, in fact. Yes, Miss Aline and the Austrian hunter were safe at Ladykirk. She could not have her mixed up in such a business, and Heinrich Wolf would look after her. Adam Ferris listened and nodded his head.

"I am a barn-door fowl that has hatched out a sparrow-hawk," he said meekly. "Do not pyke your father's eyes out, chicken!"

And with this paternal benediction Patsy went forth on her errand. Stair's Honeypot was at the door. Fergus Garland had brought him, offering at the same time to steal Derry Down from the Castle Raincy meadows. But this Patsy refused. She was not feeling particularly well affected towards Louis Raincy at that moment. Louis, as it were, had outlived his popularity.

Then began a great time. As flame after flame of lambent fire plays over the southern sky some eve of summer

lightning, so Patsy came, and flashed, and passed. Hearts waited expectant before her, grew angry and determined as they listened (not the young men only) to the tale of her wrongs, also of Stair Garland's courage and Julian Wemyss's duel. She passed and left armed men with a definite rendezvous in her wake. Still keeping high up upon the pony tracks of the moors, she passed eastwards to the Cree, crossed it, and with Godfrey McCulloch to aid her, she carried the fiery cross along the shore-side of Solway to the great arch of the Needles' Eye, which is at Douglasha', in the parish of Colvend. Here she turned, for she was frightened at what might be going on during her absence in the dim region of the flowes and flooded marshes called the Wild of Blairmore.

Behind her lads were marching. The countryside was moving. They had sworn to save Stair Garland and Julian Wemyss, and, if need be, they were ready to push the invaders of their Free Province into the sea. Rebellion, not such a thing! Merely the affirmation of ancient privileges.

Even the Lord-Lieutenant and the old hereditary sheriffs at Lochnaw were displeased by any display of military force. They resented it, as the intervention of troops has always been resented in Galloway. What could the Government be thinking of? Why not let them settle matters in their own way? They were bound officially, of course, to give the business their countenance. Really, they liked it no better than did any member of Stair Garland's band. Earl Raincy, the Stairs of Castle Kennedy, the Monreith Maxwells, the Garthlands, and my Lord Garlies felt themselves perfectly well able to maintain order in their own lands. They could have removed Julian Wemyss to a quiet place over-seas, there to abide till the Wargrove affair had blown over. Who thought the worse of him for putting ten inches of steel through the pandar of a royal Duke, who had treated Adam Ferris's daughter as if she walked the pavement of Piccadilly or the Palais Royal? And as for Stair Garland—well, their lads would

smuggle. They always had smuggled. But he was a good and a safe leader, who took his young men into no mischief and allowed no ribaldry or contempt for local authority. What more could be hoped for or expected, as long as young blood ran in young veins? And as to the little matter of the slugs in the royal haunches—well, the man was more frighted than hurt, and the twinges when the wind blew from the east, would remind even a royal duke to leave their maids alone.

If belted earls and honourable baronets, the men of ancientest lineage, thought thus—consider what was the fierceness of public opinion among the farmers and their folk—the herds on the hills, the ploughmen and cattlemen, the crowds that gathered at kirk and market?

The provisions for the investing forces had actually to be brought from Ireland, for the country wives suddenly discovered that they had nothing to sell. Shops in town received known clients at the back door and served them behind closed shutters in the murky gleam of a halfpenny "dip." Had it not been for half-a-dozen sappers who had been busy with the new naval base on Loch Swilly, his Majesty's forces would have been starved out of the country, and Galloway would have added one more to its long tale of the triumphs of passive resistance.

But the six Loch Swilly men had served in the Peninsula, and they were under a Chatham sergeant, who was a perfect Gallio, in that he cared nothing about all the things which were distracting the westernmost end of Galloway which gives on the Atlantic. He looked at the Wild of Blairmore from several sides. He swore that such a set of asses he had never seen, and then he settled himself with his five soldiers and a couple of score of impressed men, to make a cutting through the sand-dunes on the seaward side. This ditch or drain, now smooth and greyish-green with bent and self-sown saplings, is still known as the Sapper's Cut.

On the morning of the second day after Sergeant Robinson had started his digging team, Stair looked out of the

door of the Bothy and, instead of the black spread of water he had left there over-night, the Wild of Blairmore was dry. From the zig-zag causeway on either side, stretched away an array of empty moss-hags still glistening with moisture. Only in the very deepest cuts a little water still lurked.

Stair Garland's lips tightened as he turned to the interior of the Bothy.

"It is all up, Mr. Julian," he said, "I am sorry I have led you into this—I knew the thing could be done, but they had been so long in thinking of it that I had come to believe they would never hit on it at all!"

"I am sorry, McClure!" he said to the spy, "you will have to give up the money and jewels, but that I always meant you to do in any case. For the rest——"

He paused a minute, not daring to trust himself to speak more words. Then he continued—

"I have led you into all this. I thought there would have been a rescue-party long before now. There would have been if Patsy Ferris had been here. Now there is nothing for it but to give ourselves up. What is the use of making things worse by shooting two or three poor enlisted men who never did us any harm?"

And so it came to pass that Stair Garland and Eben the Spy were marched under strong escort to the gaol of Stranryan, while Julian Wemyss was shut up in his own house with a guard quartered on him. Thus had it been ordered from London, for there the Princess Elsa had been busy, and the local commanders knew that even when the Government is that of a Regent George, it cannot treat an ex-ambassador like a common felon.

. . . . . .

Stranryan is a largish town, historical and ancient, as its narrow and crooked streets sufficiently attest. At that period of the year it was exceedingly malodorous, and in the gutters tangle-headed children fished for spoil, or with noise and clangour dragged the damaged dead cat and the too-long-drowned puppy from the green ooze of one midden hole to another.

But to make some amends for this, one was never far away from the salt waters of the loch. And a breath straight from the great sea came every now and then all day long, to air out the packed houses and crooked alleys. Down on the sea front were many boats. For at the season when the Bothy was captured and Stair and the spy led to the "Auld Castle," the herring boats were getting ready for the Loch Fyne catch—a good three hundred of them, and their brown and red sails brightened everything.

Fish-scales glistened on the cobbled quays of the little port. Salesmen and buyers moved piles of fish contumeliously, saying, "It is naught! It is naught!" after the manner of their kind since the days of Solomon—who had experience in such matters, for he was undoubtedly scandalously "had" in his traffic with the spice merchants.

The gaol of Stranryan was also on the water front, and especially when the Irish harvesters landed among the products of the herring catch, it was the witness of complex and accumulated villainies. There were faction fights among the Irishry themselves. There were fights between all the Irish united and the douce burgers and tradesmen of Stranryan—fights about eggs and chickens, fights about water and other privileges, fights which ended in sleepers being ousted from barns and stables, or triumphantly retaining possession thereof. There were also religious quarrels, in which the true "Protestants" of the two countries broke the heads of the true "Kyatholics," and had their heads broken in turn, all to the greater glory of God.

All these things were normal, and the participants seldom ended their shillelah practice within the walls of "MacJannet's Hotel"—MacJannet being the name of the chief gaoler of the town prison.

"The Castle" itself was a tall old hump of a building set in a courtyard with high-spiked walls. It had once been a town house of the reigning family of the Kennedys of Cassillis. They used to spend some time there by the waterside during the summer after the long winter months at Maybole, and, indeed, their doing so counted for much in

the early history of the compact little town at the head of the loch.

The lower part of the "Castle" had been fitted up as a guard-room, and here, at all hours of the day, were to be found groups of soldiers, making the time pass in various games of chance and skill, from plain odd-and-even to *bouchon* learned from certain captive Frenchmen who were permitted to mingle with them under no very strict supervision. The square tower of the original Cassillis house had been cut down and roofed in, which gave it a very uneven and squat appearance, and all about the walls little sheds had been erected, to shelter this detachment and that on its way through to Ireland. Some of these were as old as Claverhouse and his King's Life Guards in the bad days of the covenant. But, one and all, they were insufficient, out of repair, drippy, smelling of stale bad tobacco and wet wood ashes.

Tony MacJannet, chief keeper of the prison of Stranryan, installed Stair Garland on the second story, immediately over the gate where the guard was on duty. Stair had no view to the front, but two small windows looked out on the courtyard, from which, through thick bars, he could see the comings and goings of the French prisoners, and even watch the ebb and flow of the games. Stair's chamber was spacious—the largest and best in the gaol, but the roof had not been plastered, and he could see the light through the slates, though some attempt had been made at scantling, and even in one corner a quantity of plasterers' laths had been piled. But there the matter had rested and was likely to rest.

As usual, the Town Council objected to spending money The Government sent down every year lists of "immediate requirements," which the council as promptly filed owing to the lack of any accompanying draft. To spend good siller "oot o' the Common Guid" and then look to a far-off Government to reimburse them, was an affair in which the shrewd burgesses of Stranryan very naturally declined to engage.

Julian Wemyss's case threatened to be a curious one. He had been captured in Scotland at the request of the English Government for an offence committed in France—in which country his crime was no offence at all. Some loss of time and a great deal of employment for the lawyers seemed the worst that could befall him.

It was quite otherwise with Eben McClure. He was a fugitive from justice, and had been guilty of carrying off a large sum of money and various jewels, the property of His Royal Highness the Duke of Lyonesse. He was also suspected of having led the Prince and his party into an ambuscade, where the son of the King had been wounded to the effusion of blood and the danger of his life.

For the theft alone there was one sure penalty—death.

However, as things stood the spy's unpopularity made his fate of little moment to anybody. The thoughts of all were centred on Stair Garland. He was handsome, young and interesting. The maidens of the town of Stranryan trigged themselves out in their best hats and dresses—they donned their most becoming ribbons in order to promenade in front of the " Castle."

" Three months he and the ither twa held the sodjers at bay, till they had them clean wearied oot ! " May Girmory explained to her bosom friend, Lizzie McCreath, as they promenaded together; " but to my thinkin' there is little that either of the ither two could do. It would be himsel', Lizzie, that did the thinkin' and the fetchin' ! He's the head-o' a' the Free Bands, ye ken, Lizzie ! "

" Then, to my thinkin', it's but little that the ' bands ' have done for him, the poor lad—and the more shame to them," said Lizzie. " Now, over yonder, in Ulster, if a quiet lad had been as long caged up by them divils of red-coats—it's the good dustin' their jackets would be gettin'. 'Tis Elizabeth McCreath and the daughter of a law-abiding Orangeman that will be tellin' ye so ! "

" Hoots, lassie," said her friend, " you Stranryan Irish or half-Irish are all for doing a thing like the banging off of a peeoye. But what maitters a day or twa for a fine,

strong lad in the best chamber of the Castle? Stair Garland is not tried yet and, what is more, he is not sentenced. And if he is sentenced, where will he serve his time? Will he be going ayont seas to be sold in the tobacco plantations or off in a ship to Botany Bay? I tell you the keel is not laid, and the mast is not out of the acorn that will carry away Stair Garland. And as to hanging him—faith, they will need all their forces back from the wars before they could do siccan a thing in Galloway!"

She lowered her voice and spoke in the ear of the Irish girl, the Orangeman's daughter.

"Lizzie McCreath," she whispered, "can you keep a secret?"

"What else, noo?" said Lizzie, with avidity, "did you ever hear tell where you were with Sandy O'Neil on the night of the Saint John?"

"That's nothing," retorted May Girmory, "for where I was on the Beltane eve, there in that very place ye were yourself—you and my brither Jo. It is like that ye would keep *that* secret? But this is different."

"I will keep it, 'by the hand and fut of Mary,'" said Lizzie McCreath, quite forgetting that she was the daughter of the Grand Master of an Orange Lodge.

"Well, then," said May, "there is a Princess riding about the country, here and there and away. She has all Stair Garland's band ready, and hundreds more, too—aye, thousands if need be, pledged to rescue the lads laid up there. Jo is in it."

"Oh," said Liz McCreath, with a curious alteration of tone, "Jo is in it, is he? And he never said a word to me."

"Neither did he to me, but somebody else telled me——"

"Sandy O'Neil, it would be, maybe then, like as not!"

"And what for no?" demanded the revealer of secrets, and so proceeded unblushingly with her tale. She skipped some parts, to which she had been sworn to particular secrecy. But Miss Liz McCreath, while noting these, let the blanks pass, comfortably sure in her mind that so soon as she got Jo Girmory by himself, she knew a way of making

him tell her all about it—the same, indeed, as that by which May Girmory had brought Sandy O'Neil to full auricular confession.

"But what like is your Princess? Does she wear a goold crown now?" said the Irish girl.

"Not her," said May Girmory, "she has a riding skirt, the way folk has them made in London, and gangs by at a hand-gallop, a different powny every time, and Lord, she doesna spare them!"

"That," said Liz McCreath with cold contempt, "is no Princess at all. 'Tis only little Patsy Ferris from Cairn Ferris, and I saw her faither yesterday at the Apothecaries' Hall at the Vennel Head!"

"And what wad he be wantin' there, now?"

"He asked for 'something soothin',' and he appeared most terribly glad to get it. He did be takin' a good drink on the spot."

"Puir man, I am sure he had need o't. He will maybe no be so very anxious aboot this lad Garland as his dochter!"

"So I was thinking, but what garred ye be whistling in my lug that she was a Princess? A laird's lass is no a Princess, that ever I heard of over yonder!"

"There's a heap of things ye have not heard 'over yonder,' and this may be one of them. But Patsy Ferris is a Princess because she could be a Princess the very minute she made up her mind to marry a Prince that has been askin' her and double asking her. Eelen Young, my cousin, that is with Miss Aline at Ladykirk, was telling me all about it, and it appears that up there in London our Miss Patsy could have had the pick of princes and dukes——"

"And with all said an' done she runs away (Glory be to her brave sowl!) just to raise the country and get Stair Garland safe over the sea!"

"Do not be foolish, Liz McCreath," said her comrade, "without doubt it was to save her uncle that was trapped in the Bothy of Blairmore at the same time!"

"Her uncle!—her uncle!" cried Liz McCreath; "the back o' me hand to all your uncles. How much would you be doing now for all the half-score of uncles that ye have in this parish? Not as much as would fatten a fly. No, nor Elizabeth McCreath either. 'Tis her lad she is fightin' for—and well do you know it, May Girmory. She will have sat out the Beltane fires wid him, darlin', and certain that'll be the raison why!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE PRISON-BREAKERS

THE nights were fast waxing shorter. It was necessary that no time should be wasted. Patsy waited till there was a change of garrison at Stranryan. Long spoken of, it came at last. The relief had been signalled from afar—at Carlisle, at Dumfries, and now crossing the hills by the military road from New Galloway.

On the night before its arrival the storm burst upon the little fishing town scattered so carelessly along the shores of the Loch of Ryan. The two companies of the light cavalry division had marched out that afternoon leaving their barracks empty, swept and wholly ungarnished for the troops which were to arrive to replace them.

Stranryan will long remember that twenty-fourth of May. In the evening there was a wind off the Loch, a little irregular but pleasantly fanning to cheeks heated with the good-night bumper. So the burgesses stayed out a little longer than usual on the quay in the fading light, standing about in groups or marching up and down in pairs solemnly talking business or of the "Common Guid" of the town. How, for instance, they thought of electing the Earl Raincy to be their provost, honorary as to duties, but exceedingly decorative and possibly useful. The ninety-nine-year leases of the Out Parks would fall in during his time of office, and the feu duties would have to be rearranged. It would be a very suitable thing indeed—in all respects—that is, if the Earl could see his way—and so on and so forth.

He had certainly been more approachable lately, ever since Miss Patsy had gone to stay at Castle Raincy. A

year or two before he would have damned them up and down all the hills if they had ventured to mention such a thing to him. They looked forward with hope to a more amicable reception now.

One by one they began to draw out turnip-shaped watches from their fobs, and having first held the case to their ears to make sure that there was no deception, the dial was examined, and with a casual, "Guid nicht to ye—the goodwife will be waitin'," the members of the town council and other municipal dignitaries strolled off each to his own house.

It did not strike any of them that they had not seen the town's night watchman, old Jock McAdam, in the performance of his duties. If it had occurred to any of the burghal authorities, it had only provoked the reflection that Jock would most likely be discussing a pint or two at Lucky Forgan's down by the Brigend, and that presently he would be perambulating the streets of the royal borough, his halbert over his shoulder, and intoning his song—

"Twal' o'clock on the strike,
And a fine fresh nicht."

But Jock had been early encountered near the abandoned guardhouse of the cavalry quarters, and there had been safely locked in with a loaf of bread and three gigantic tankards of ale. It was not likely, therefore, that the time of night would be cried in Stranryan by Jock McAdam's booming bellow. Jock was at peace with all the world and the town had better remain so also.

Then came the first of the little ponies. The town had often listened to the clatter of their feet. It was familiar with the jingling of their accoutrements. But never had Stranryan rung with that music from side to side, and from end to end, as it did that night of the twenty-fourth of May!

Patter, patter, tinkle, tinkle—two and three abreast they came. Timid citizens in breezy costumes about to blow out the candle made haste to do so, and peered goggle-eyed round the edges of the drawn-down blind.

"What's to do? It's the lads of the Free Trade—hundreds o' them, all armed, and never a load pony amang them. Every man on his horse and none led!—Not a pack-saddle to be seen. Will they never go by? It's no canny, I declare! I shouldna' be standin' here lookin'. There will be blood shed before the morn's morning. Guid send that they do not burn us a' in our beds!"

"Come to your ain bed, ye auld fule!" was the wife's sleepy rejoinder; "if the gentlemen have onything to sell, we will hear of it the morn as usual. 'Tis not for the like of us to be watching ower closely the doings of them that tak's the risk while we drink the drappie!"

Oh, wise and somnolent lady, somewhat ill-informed in the present case, but on the whole of excellent and approven advice! It were indeed better for your good Thomas that he should neither see nor hear, and be in no wise able to give any evidence as to the doings of "these gentlemen," this one night of the year.

Soon, however, the whole town was awake and listening. But nobody ventured out into the street. Accidents had been known to occur, painful errors in identification. Even the chief civil authority of the town was deterred from sallying forth by a remembrance of a predecessor in the provostship who had been buried in a stable mixen all but his head, to the detriment of his clothes and the still greater and more lasting hurt to his dignity.

The bell of the town steeple clanged loudly half-a-dozen times, and ceased as abruptly as if the breath had been choked out of the bellringer. That was the sole attempt at alarm which was given in the town of Stranryan on the night of the Great Riding.

By all the ports they came hurrying in—ceaseless, close ranked, without end and past counting. Over the wild uplands which lie between Leswalt and Stranryan, the Back Shore men arrived—not a man missing. They were the nearest and their horses were quite unbreathed. Stoney-kirk and Kirkmaiden came next, and then the lads from the moors with hair bushy about the fetlocks of their steeds.

They were a broad-shouldered and go-as-you-please crowd. They marched directly to the door of the Castle, and took up their position before it, awaiting orders. Then you might see two score of black-a-vised Blairs and McKerrows from Galriestown and the two Luces. Last of all, with wearied horses but in ranks of unbroken firmness, came the Stewartry men, headed by Godfrey McCulloch.

On Stair's Honeypot rode Patsy, ordering and ranging everything everywhere. She was as calm as if on her own ground at Cairn Ferris, and neither she nor any of the chiefs made any attempt at concealment. Only some few of the rank-and-file, sons of lairds and functionaries, fiscals and suchlike cattle, wore masks so as not to implicate their fathers.

"And now, McJannet," it was Patsy's clear voice that rang out, "open your old gates or we will have them down without your permission!"

But McJannet, keeper of his Majesty's strong house of Stranryan, knew that there was a time to be silent as well as a time to speak. He did not speak, and the next minute tall ladders with ropes arranged from their tops were reared at the word of command against both the gates. The Garlies men swarmed up them and with sailorlike agility descended into the big courtyard of the ancient Cassillis townhouse.

A moment more and the bars were drawn from within. The multitude swarmed in without a sound. No cheer was heard, only the confused noise of many feet and suppressed calls to this one and that to come and help to man the scaling ladders. The young men of the town of Stranryan itself were masked, since it was not fitting that sons of high magistrates should hunt through all the building and wood yards, aye, and even the paternal back-premises, to bring up ladders and forehammers to the fray. It had been their duty to provide these things, and by Patsy's orders they were taking no chances beyond the ordinary personal ones common to all prison-breakers.

"McJannet—McJannet—open there, you lurking dog!"

But just then McJannet was more than usually deaf. He knew that he would have to answer for that night's work and it did not suit him to do anything of his own accord. A pistol at his head and a demand for the keys—well, that would be coercion, and when a man is compelled and put in fear of his life, what can he do? But for the present McJannet lay safe and quiet behind his six-foot-thick walls and waited for that to happen which should happen.

Torches began to flare smokily in the courtyard and ladders were hooked to roof cornices. More ladders, tied safely together, were hoisted to riggings of buildings and held in place by ropes conveniently cleeked round chimneys. On these little dark figures climbed upwards, up and up interminably, till they reached the grey hump of roof under which lay the prisoners.

Picks and hammers went up from hand to hand, many helping. Fragments of slate and tile began to rain down, but nothing had been achieved till the blacksmith brigade, headed by Andrew Sproat of Clachanpluck, a famous horse-shoer, laid into the iron-bound doors of the prison.

"Clang! Clang!" went the forehammers, as the men holding their torches low made a circle of murky light about the workers. Every blow made the doors leap, striking full on the huge lock. All who stood in the yard could hear them leap on their hinges.

"'Tis the bolts that are holding—can't you feel them draw?" cried Andrew, the smith, "Bring all the hammers to one side! Now for it! Strike a little lower there!" And the three great forehammers struck so accurately that the lock gave way with a grinding crunch. The doors hung only by the bolts at top and bottom. Soon the aperture was so widened that a hand could be introduced and the iron rods shot back. The gates of the prison on the sea-front were thrown back and with the same silence as before the crowd poured in—all, that is, except the unfortunates, chosen by lot, who had been designated to look after the horses.

"McJannet—McJannet—the keys, McJannet!"

The gaolor's quarters were swiftly invaded. One blow of Andrew Sproat's massy hammer did that business, and thereafter the gaolor did not lack for coercion. Godfrey McCulloch had a pistol to his head, and the bell mouth of a huge blunderbuss lay chill between his shoulder-blades, thrusting him forward.

"Open every cell!" he was ordered by Godfrey McCulloch. "We must have them all out. There are torches and the old place might take light. The wood is sure to be as dry as tinder after four centuries!"

And the lads of the "Bands" let the prisoners go, every man and woman of them. Only some Irish reapers clamouring for their reaping-hooks to be returned to them were pitched neck and crop into the street with small consideration and few apologies. And still they pressed on! Above them the hammering on the roof could be heard. It ceased, and it was evident that the gaol from dungeon to rooftree was in the power of the "Lads of the Heather."

But still no Stair Garland! The brows of the seekers grew black.

"If ye have sent him away secretly with the soldier men, 'ware yourself, McJannet," said Godfrey, "we will roast you in your own black keep. We will gar your accursed Castle of the Press flame like a chimbly on fire, as sure as we came out of Rerrick!"

"He is here—I tell you—there is one of them, at any rate!" He threw open the door of a cell triumphantly and showed the pallid countenance of Eben the Spy.

For one instant the multitude stood silent, then with a howl of anger and disappointment they were flinging themselves upon him.

"Tear him to pieces!—Kill the spy. Who sent our Davie to the hulks?"

But Patsy's voice cried, "Back there, men! He has bought his pardon. He was with Stair Garland for two months on the Wild. He was captured with him. I tell

you we owe him his life. Touch him not. Stair will vouch for him. And in the meanwhile, so will I ! "

This did not satisfy the crowd, but they obeyed. They were compelled to obey, for that night there was only one leader among them. Smith Andrew, however, took Eben by the collar of his coat and marched him to the door of the prison. In the courtyard a new shout arose.

" Let him alone," cried his protector, " Patsy says he is with us. He is not to be killed."

So he led Eben to the outer gate, and with one enormous kick he discharged his duty to society and to his own feelings.

" Go," he cried, " be off ! We are ordered not to do you any harm. But be out of the town before the morning light. For then Patsy may not be on the spot to speak up for you, and the lads are apt to get a little out of hand at sicht o' ye ! "

It was the roof-breakers who descended first upon Stair Garland. They found him fully dressed and waiting for them. But the doors of his cell, which was that reserved for the most important criminals, could not be broken from the interior, and they could get no farther for the moment, However, the noise of the crowd beneath mounted higher and nearer, sounding like the roaring of a tide in a sea cave.

A key clicked in the lock. Bolts were drawn, and the men who had broken the doors and roofs stood back with respect to let Patsy go in alone.

She had been his only saviour, and she alone must tell Stair that he was free. She came to Stair Garland flushed and quick breathing, who stood before her pale and with his Viking hair flying all about his head.

" I came from London to do it, Stair, and it is done ! " she said. She took his hand to lead him away, and at sight of them with one accord the Lads of the Heather uncovered.

Out in the courtyard it was like a triumphal procession as they passed to their horses. Men laughed aloud, they

knew not why. A spirit of mirth was abroad, which had taken possession of all except dark Godfrey McCulloch.

"You are sure there is no prisoner left within your old tourock?" he demanded of McJannet. The gaolor turned to his register and proved it.

"Very well!" said Godfrey, "off with you—sleep under some decent man's roof if ye can find any to shelter ye!"

And taking a torch from one of his followers he carefully fired the stores of kindling wood which filled part of the ground-floor of the ancient Wark of the Cassillis folk. In ten minutes, before even the cavalcade was entirely mounted, the flames were bursting through the humped roof in a fiery fountain of gold sparks and ruddy jags of flame, while the pillar of smoke rose many hundreds of feet into the still morning air.

At the English Gate, by which they rode out, they encountered a company of dragoons, weary from a long march, their horses footsore and the men reeling in their saddles with sleep.

"You have come too late," cried Godfrey McCulloch to the leader, waving his hand in the direction of the fiery beacon, now loudly crackling, and sprouting to the heavens.

But the officer answered not a word. His eyes were on Patsy Ferris riding by the side of Stair Garland, talking to him as one who had won a great prize, or has found her heart's desire.

So the captain of dragoons gave no order, for at the sight his heart was turned to stone within him.

His name was Louis Raincy, and he had quite forgotten pretty Mrs. Arlington.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE PICTS' WAY IS THE WOMAN'S WAY

THE deed being done, the doers soon dispersed. A strong body-guard composed of Back Shore men and the lads from the Stewartry seaboard, rode with Patsy and Stair to the small unfrequented landing-place of Port Luce, where a boat was waiting for them. Patsy dismounted from Honeypot and bade Stair Garland get on board.

"I am in command still, Stair," she cried, smiling at his bewilderment. "Besides, I am running off with you, as Uncle Ju says the Pictish women always did!"

And Stair dumbly obeyed, for the thing he heard was too marvellous for him to believe. Though his heart beat hard, he kept his head, and did not allow his imagination to run away with him. He scented one of Patsy's jests. That she should come from London in the *Good Intent*, that she should raise the country, that she should head the prison-breakers—these things he could understand. Still he remembered what she had said when she had been run away with by the Duke of Lyonesse.

"I was in no danger: when it is my fate to love a man, it is I, Patsy Ferris, who shall run away with him!"

But he was a wise lad and had lived too long among the Will-o'-the-Wisps on the Wild of Blairmore to be easily led astray by them. So he took Patsy's speech as merely her way and thought no more about it—at least not more than he could help.

It was already high day, brisk and clean-blowing, when they reached the little herring smack which lay waiting for them out in the bay. Godfrey McCulloch went with

them, dark browed, silent. When he lifted his eyes he could see, across the plain of the middle Rhynns, the reek of the accursed prison-house of Stranryan still going up to heaven. Then he laughed a little, also silently.

" They will have to shift," he said: " John Knox was in the right o't. ' Pull down the nests and the craws will fly away.' No more cells for lads from the ploughtail and the heather. No more bloody whipping-posts, where one or two are killed out of every draft to put the fear of death into the others ! All gone up in yon puff of smoke ! " Then he subsided into silence and his hard features relaxed as his mind fell upon other thoughts.

Stair and he were working the little boat while Patsy steered. They were going up the Solway and the wind behind them was strong and equal. Still no indication of their destination had been made to Stair. At five of the afternoon they had passed all the familiar landmarks known to him, but by the alertness of young McCulloch he judged that they must be near the haunts allotted to his part of the Band.

The Isle of Man lay faintly blue far to the south, and the hills about Skiddaw and Helvellyn began to uplift themselves in amethystine ridges. Towns and villages ran white along the Cumberland coast, and once it seemed to Stair as if they might be going to land somewhere to the east of St. Bees. But they were only keeping well out till the twilight of the evening drew down. They came about in mid-channel and lay some hours with lowered sail in the lee of a cliffy island. During all this time Patsy watched the shore intently, and did not speak to him at all. She held what colloquy was necessary with Godfrey McCulloch, on whose face there was a quite inscrutable smile. He seemed to be turning over in his mind some jest known only to himself, perhaps no more then the burning of the Castle of Stranryan and how well McJannet's firewood blazed up when he put the torch to it. But ever and anon he glanced at the unconscious Stair Garland, when he was looking another way, with an expression so humorsome

that it was evident he considered that in some way the joke was against him.

At six of the evening, the tide aiding, they had drifted across many headlands and past carven cliffs of marvellous designs to a long sickle sweep of strand on which two men could be seen solemnly walking up and down. Then, at a signal from Patsy, Godfrey McCulloch let down the anchor and pulled in hand over hand the little skiff which they had been dragging in their wake all day.

Stair thought that it was a reckless thing to put ashore while the sun was still high above the horizon. Still the spot was a lonely one—on one side great heathy tracts rising slowly away towards the foothills of Criffel—on the other a turmoil of huge cliffs and purple summits to the west, while behind them all the expanse of Solway lay like polished silver, clean as a platter ready for the service of a great house.

The two men walked steadily to and fro. The boat, propelled lustily by Godfrey of the saturnine smile, bounded towards the land. It grounded on a rapidly shelving beach on which they sprang ashore. Godfrey attached the boat to a stone, and gave her plenty of rope to ride.

Then all three went to the encounter of the two men. Both of them were dressed in decent black with something vaguely official about it, and the taller of the two had a scrap of black cloth after the fashion of a college gown but infinitely shorter, thrown over his shoulders. The other was a smaller and tubbier man, pleasant to look upon, a man evidently who lived for and by good eating and drinking. He had a large book under his arm, so heavy that as often as the two paused in their walk he laid it carefully down on the sand and sat upon it—while the tall man, undisturbed, continued his monologue over his comrade's head.

The two parties met at last, their shadows thrown far beyond them on the moist sand and mingling ludicrously as they altered their positions.

" Aweel," said the tall man, " what's a' this ? "

His voice was not at all unkindly, and it was to Patsy he spoke. He turned in time to catch the little round man in the act of plumping down his big book on the sand, and he lifted him up again by inserting the hook of a huge forefinger in his collar as if he had been a deep-sea catch.

"Stand up there, Saunders Duff! God made man to stand erect on his two feet, but you would be for ever hunkering like a monkey eatin' nuts. Chin up, and shoulders back, man! If you dinna ken your duty to King and Country, I ken mine!"

"Aye, aye, skipper," said Saunders Duff, shaking his head sadly, "but this vollum is a plaguey heavy cargo and 'tis a long time between ports!"

"It had need to be," said the tall man, "it contains weighty matters—matters that shall not run away as unprofitable water, as is so well said in the 'Book of the Wisdom.' But it appears to me, by what I have learned, that this young lady had some questions to ask in my presence. Well, Mistress Headstrong, if you will take my advice, refrain. I am of Paul's faction. It is meet for a woman to be silent. I say that without the least hope of having my advice attended to. Get ye up from off that book, Saunders Duff, or I, that am a 'Magister Artium' of the College of Edinburgh will kick you into the salt tide, carefully retaining the folio which is worth many scores of Saunders Duffs!"

Stair understood not one word of his speech. He even began to think he had fallen among a collection of amiable lunatics, when Patsy turned swiftly upon him and, without a quiver of the voice, with her eyes dark and level upon his face, demanded point blank—

"*Will you, Stair Garland, take me, Patricia Ferris, for your wife?*"

The world spun round the astonished Stair. He clutched at the thing which happened to be nearest. This chanced to be the arm of Godfrey McCulloch, who seemed to wear a smile of diabolic sarcasm on his face.

"Steady there—stand up and say 'Yes' or 'No!' Will you or won't you?"

"I WILL!" cried Stair Garland, finding his voice in a manner that scared the gulls on the cliff ledges, so wild and rancous it was.

"*Then I, Patricia Ferris, take you for my husband!*"

"Before God and these witnesses!" added the man with the ragged college cloak: "to wit, before me, James Fraser, Magister Artium, minister of this pairish, and of the unworthy Saunders Duff, session clerk of the same. Saunders, ye were braw at the sittin' afore. Clatch doon noo, man, and make your entry. Get all the names and surnames, while I collect the fees. The business is, ecclesiastically speaking, a little irregular (though perfectly legal) but that will doubtless be considered in the matter of the marital dues. If I am duly satisfied as to these, I shall know how to arrange with the Presbytery."

"Let me attend to this business," said Godfrey McCulloch, suddenly alive, and forestalling Stair Garland. "Step this way, minister."

And while the session clerk, cross-legged like a Turk on the sand, made his entries with much dipping of ink out of a tax-collector's bottle swung from his breast pocket, weird screechings of goose-quill, and dabbings of pounce box, the sound of confused argumentation came from the other group.

"I tell ye I will not risk the scandal for less than half-a-dozen kegs—all the best Hollands—cheap at the price. Think of the Presbytery!"

"Minister, the thing is done and in your presence. I will promise no such quantity. But three of Hollands and three of Isle of Man brandy, as was agreed upon. Consider, it will be worse for you to be denounced as art and part in an irregular marriage—a laird's daughter, too—a pretty-like thing to come before the Presbytery and you the moderator!"

"Let it be as you will, Godfrey McCulloch, but if ye have a spark of human kindness in your hard heart let it be

Hollands! Your Isle of Man brandy agrees but ill with my stammack, and if I dee o't my ghost will haunt ye. I will preach to ye, one by one, all my forty sermons on the King's birthday!"

Godfrey McCulloch threw up his hands.

"Hollands let it be—six kegs at the next run, only lift the interdict. I would rather be hanged at once and be done with it."

"You are not polite, young man," said the minister. "The sermons have been pronounced excellent by the very best judges, but I was right in supposing that you would not care to listen to forty of the best sermons ever preached! Six of Hollands be it then, lad, and put in the auld place—I shall see that the clerk is duly paid to hold his tongue! *Whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder!* I nearly forgot, and indeed it is in nowise necessary, being but a Popish formula. Guid nicht to ye, and mind the Hollands!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

STIFF-NECKED AND REBELLIOUS

The breeze quickened from the south. The lugger sped through the water, and Stair Garland still sat dazed. Never had any man felt such a fool. Here he was firmly and legally wedded, and he dare not even address a word to his bride. He had spoken no syllable of gladness or affection—triple dolt—quadruple fool—prize-winner among idiots! He had nothing to say—he could say nothing. Nor was it the presence of a third person which prevented him. Perhaps, rather, something in Patsy's eye, and—though that he would not acknowledge, a lurking grimness in the smile about the wicks of Godfrey's mouth.

It was not courage that Stair lacked—only everything about Patsy awed him. He did not yet understand her. The whys and the wherefores of her actions were still completely dark to him.

But Patsy was not a young woman to wrap up her mind. When she had anything to say, she said it. So after they had turned about and were beating up against wind and tide for their island, under the lee of which they had been laid to all the afternoon, she vouchsafed an explanation—or at least as much of a vindication as Patsy ever permitted herself.

"Stair Garland," she said, "listen to me, and you, Godfrey McCulloch, take that Satanic leer off your face. You have no idea how unattractive it makes you look! You should be framed and hung up to frighten naughty children.

"I am sick of being looked after. I am weary of being educated and leading-stringed, and chaperoned. Now I am

going to chaperon myself for ever and ever. I told father I should do this if he pestered me with his princesses. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of coddling—I hate Hanover Lodge. I hate all the things Uncle Julian loves, except only some few books. I cannot even have little Miss Aline put over me. It is too cruel to tag her round after me, jigging this way and that like the skiff there in our wake. She was made and invented to abide at Ladykirk, and to rule over Eelen Young and the brass preserving-pans. Why, because I am a girl, should the poor lady be traiked all over the world in an agony of dispeace? So I married you, Stair. It is hard on you, I know. Being a gentleman you could not very well refuse when I asked you before the minister——"

Here Stair made an indefinite noise in his throat, which, if he could have spoken, would have been an eloquent statement-at-large of the state of his affections. He cursed himself for his imbecility. Louis Raincy, he felt sure, would have found the right thing to say—even the Poor Scholar—not to say any of the fine gentlemen whom Patsy had left behind in London. After all she had left them. That was one comfort. She had come to save him. But what in the name of the prince of darkness was that idiot of a Godfrey McCulloch grinning at? Surely there was nothing so absolutely strange about the situation. The man they had seen was a minister—the minister of a parish. He was in Geneva gown, and bands—such as they were. His session clerk was with him. The kirk register had been duly signed.

If that ugly, black-browed McCulloch would only stop grinning and take himself off—perhaps even yet he could put the matter right.

"I only wanted you to know, before we land," said the clear-cut, faceted voice of Patsy, ringing out the syllables like the pouring of little diamonds into a thin wineglass, "that you, Stair Garland, must be my chaperon—no princesses or Miss Alines any more. You can protect me from grand dukes with no more courage and deter-

mination than you did before, but now you will have an open indubitable right in that you are my husband! But here we are at the island. And there down on the rocks, do you see, Stair, who are there to welcome us? Your sister Jean, and Whitefoot. And Kennedy—Kennedy McClure——!"

She hung about the neck of a stout red-faced man, who murmured all the time of the embrace, "Tut, lassie. Think shame, lassie!" and dabbed at his eyes and blew his nose with a bandanna handkerchief with the noise of many trumpets.

"Guid-day to ye, lass, and to you, Stair Garland! Ye hae a wild filly to gentle. Be not downcast if the job be a long one. She will be worth it."

"What, Jean, you are never going?" cried Stair, when he saw his sister preparing to accompany the Laird of Supsorrow into the lugger. Somehow it seemed that he could have seen his way plainer before him if Jean had stayed. But as Godfrey McCulloch hoisted the sail, he shouted, "Go she must. There are a pair of fathers away yonder in the Cairn Ferris Valleys to be contented. And I am not sure that they will be easy to satisfy. But your sister Jean and Kennedy McClure there, and this extract from the parish register signed by parish minister and session clerk will show them that you and your wife are beyond all pursuit. As for the prison-breaking and the law, there will doubtless be great riding and running, but I do not believe that here on Isle Rathan you will be in any way disquieted."

It was nine of the clock when Patsy and Stair stood on the shore of the Isle Rathan of many famous exploits, and watched the lugger with its cargo of three go dancing out on the full current of the Solway ebb.

The two were left alone and the island seemed incredibly small and strange about them—at least to Stair. But Patsy was not in the least put about. She did the honours of the old tower of the Herons. She led the way to where Jean had spread their first meal, and motioned Stair to

his place. He sat down like an automaton and looked about him as if he were seeing through a haze. It was a large and pleasant kitchen, stone-floored, with oak furniture as old as the time of Patrick Heron and May Mischief his wife. A bright fire was burning on the old-fashioned hearth, and the room looked cosy enough in spite of the old small-paned windows. It had recently been put into order, and new, bright utensils hung upon the ranges of pins and hooks against the wall.

But Stair's food seemed to choke him, somehow. He felt the imperious need of speech.

"Oh, Patsy!" he began—but he got no farther. Patsy was in possession of the field in a moment.

"Stair," she said warningly, as she held up her hand to stop him; "Stair, you have never failed me yet. Don't let me trust you in vain. I married you because I had need of you——"

"Not," said Stair, speaking disjointedly, "not because you wanted to marry me—not because—you loved me?"

"Oh, I wanted to marry you! Yes, I wanted that. I needed you to help me to do what I could not do in any other way. But—wait a while. Neither you nor I know what love means yet. *I* certainly do not. I am too young. Meanwhile, you are the most dependable person in my world. Let love alone for a little. What difference can it make to you and me? Let us help one another, depend one on the other—I have run off with you, and if you are under age I dare say I could be put into prison for that. But that is the way of the Pict woman. What she wants, she takes. I ran away from London. I took you out of prison, and when I had you, I brought you here to live on herrings. I wanted to be rid of princes who pestered me to marry them, of royal dukes who ran away with me, of kind uncles and princesses who thought to make my bed all eiderdown and cotton-wool, my food all rose-leaves and honey!"

"I understand—I understand," said Stair, with a certain fierce determination in his eye, "you shall have no

cause to regret that you have chosen me as your squire and armour-bearer. I shall not claim more than is my due, and of what that is I have a very small opinion indeed!"

Patsy looked at Stair. He seemed to be understanding —almost too well. There was no need that he should remove himself to so vast a distance. She wanted them to be two comrades—two Crusoes without a man Friday, working harmoniously for the common good of the community. But Stair held out for a position frankly subaltern.

"If you will tell me what I am to do—you know the place better than I—it is time to do it!" He was outwardly calm, inwardly raging, as he spoke.

"There is, thank you, some water to bring in—the spring is within the courtyard. The well-rope has a bucket. Thank you!"

And Patsy was left alone. She thought Stair Garland long in returning. He had, indeed, looked into all the outbuildings, where he discovered a couple of cows that needed to be milked and let out on the dewy pastures for the night, fowls that must be shut up, and in the barn the remains of a once full mow of hay which would make excellent sleeping accommodation.

When he got back Patsy was covering up the fire for the night. She had washed the dishes, and dried them with a dispatch to which Julian Wemyss and he had never attained after months of practice on the Wild of Blairmore.

She listened to the relation of the discoveries he had made out of doors, and agreed when he told her that he must be on hand to drive the cows back to the byre at daybreak. As seen from the sea, there must be nothing to mark the island as inhabited.

"Remember to lock the door on the inside," he said, "I shall sleep in the barn that I may be ready for my work in the morning. You will be quite safe here in the tower. Good-night, Patsy!"

And without waiting for a single word he was gone into the darkness. Patsy had pictured something much more

idyllic than this. How they would enjoy their first meal! How they would chatter over it like a pair of daws in the same nest. How they would fight their battles over again, Patsy telling all her adventures in London, of the Prince Eitel, the riding of the dukes, the balls and levees—how she had met with Kennedy McClure, and how she had come all the way in the *Good Intent* to save him. She had her night-rides, her plots and combinations to relate—how this parish would have sent so many, but could not have them up to time—how another set of good lads were terrorised by a wrathful overlord.

From Stair she would sit and listen to the story of the defence of the Bothy on the Wild. She would hear of the Princess's letter to her uncle, how they passed the long dark winter months when the snow blocked all, the coming of spring, the cutting of the dunes by the company of sappers, and the capture. But instead, it was all distant and dry. A "Good-night" such as one might have thrown at a dog—no, he would not throw the word at Whitefoot. For even as she passed the postern window, looking out she saw Stair crossing the court in the direction of the barn, side by side with Whitefoot. The dog's eyes were raised to those of his master in a kind of adoration, and his tail waved triumphantly. As Stair bent to stroke the dog's head, Patsy became conscious of a strange new thing within her.

It was something she had never felt before, though almost any other woman would have diagnosed at once. It was, in fact, nothing less than her first twinge of jealousy.

She chose to forget all the wise precepts by which she had regulated Stair's conduct toward her. She forgot how she had carefully explained to him that all the duties were to be on his side, and all the benefits on hers.

"He did not even shake hands," she thought, looking at the wrist which the Prince and other great gentlemen has so often fervently kissed, "and yet he can stop to pat that dog's head!"

Nobody had told Patsy that marriage is a dish that

cannot be eaten by one while the other looks on. She had chosen her way. She had carried it through, and now in spite of the luminous explanations which she had given Stair as to their relative positions and duties, he had chosen to misunderstand, and had marched off straight as a ramrod.

And she caught herself murmuring over and over to herself, "Stiff-necked and rebellious—stiff-necked and rebellious!"

It was to Stair she referred, but the accompanying stamp of the little foot might possibly have raised doubts as to the correctness of her application, had any been there to see.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A PICTISH HONEYMOON

STAIR GARLAND slept little that night. He wandered in the cool purple darkness here and there about the island, listening to the curious noises of the birds, complaining vaguely, or calling one to the other from the rocky ledges. He was conscious of the perpetual drumming of the sea in his ears, as the tide ran, jostled in the narrow reaches, and hammered without ceasing on the outer cliffs of the little island.

The pair of cows were company to him. He wondered whence they came and who had placed them there. They did not waste their time, but munched steadily at the lush grasses in the interior meadow of the isle—the hollow palm of its hand, as it were. The problem took his mind for a while off his own miseries.

Some one had been there. Some one had been accustomed to tend and milk them. It could not be his sister Jean, for she could not have been long enough spared from the farm at Glenanmays. Who, then, had provided all that they found waiting for them? The poultry he had penned in darkness, so that their early crowing might not awaken Patsy. She must know. She had prepared all this. She had prepared everything. Even his own delivery from prison, even the great muster of the Bands to override authority and save him, were only little dove-tailings in the scheme which Patsy had designed for her own liberation.

Well, he had nothing to complain of. He had been asked a question, and if he had wished he might have answered "No." Was he a free man or bound? But having said

" Yes " of his own good will, what remained to him but to take up the rôle which Patsy had reserved for him. It was not remarkably dignified, but—if any fault there were, the fault was his own.

Besides, he would have given the same answer then or any other moment. He had not been taken by surprise. So long as he was Patsy's husband, nobody else could be so also ! Why, of course, he would stand by his bargain ! What else was he for—he, Diarmid Garland's second son—the head of the bands, the famous defier of the press and the Preventives ? Pshaw ! What did all that mean to him now—apples of Sodom in the mouth, an exceeding bitter fruit ! What a fool he was with his airs ! Would he ever have such a chance again, and he to dream of complaining !

Gradually he became conscious of Whitefoot moving, silent as a shadow, beside his master. Once, when Stair stood a long time on the craggy top of the Fell of Rathan, gazing out at the ranged lights on the English side of the firth, he was conscious of a cool, damp nose thrusting its way into his palm, causing him to open his hand by little calculated snout-pushes and burrowings. Whitefoot was sympathetic. Whitefoot felt for the trouble of his master, though he could not understand it, and Whitefoot would not be satisfied till his friend's hand was resting on his head. Even then little heavings and sidelong pushes expressed a desire to be caressed, and when at last Stair's hand ran over his head, across the thick ruff of hair about his neck and passed down his spine, Whitefoot shook with delight and leaped so high that his forepaws were on Stair's shoulders.

" Down, dog, down ! " said his master, and at the word Whitefoot dropped back on all fours, obedient but content.

It now was past the hour of twelve. The central night stood still. The little chill breeze which ruffles the waves an hour or so in early morning had not yet begun to blow. Stair had been about the House of Rathan half-a-dozen of times. At last he went into the barn and, only removing

his coat, he threw himself at length among the straw of which he had made a couch earlier in the evening. Whitefoot nuzzled comfortably up against him. He did not mean to sleep. It would soon be morning and there were the cows out in the little meadows. He would only close his eyes for a moment.

It will not be surprising to learn that the next sound he heard was a happy laugh, as Patsy appeared at the open door of the barn with "Awake, thou sluggard" upon her lips.

"I looked in half-an-hour ago," she laughed, "and you looked so sweet and peaceful that I went and milked the cows before wakening you."

"You milked the cows?"

Patsy nodded her head with its tight cover of curls, all of densest black, shapely and boyish.

"The milk is in the dairy!" she said. "Concerning what else does my lord please to inquire?"

"But the two cows?" he said, hastily getting up and putting on his coat, which he had spread over him, "they ought not to be left out all day on the high grass. Cruising sloops of war, and even Preventive men with spy-glasses, might easily see them from the shore."

"I had thought of that, my lord," said Patsy, "I confined them with a good reach of rope behind the old fold which lies hidden out of sight in the hollow of the island. No one can see them there, unless they mount on the cliffs and look down on them from the height of the island. They will be happy there, for the rabbits and gulls have not spoilt the grass."

Stair stood up beside Patsy in the doorway of the barn. The gate of the yard was open, and they walked slowly towards it, splendid widths of sea and heights of cloudless heaven opening out before them at every step. Instinctively Patsy caught Stair by the arm, gave it a little joyous tug, and cried out, "Oh, Stair, was ever anything so beautiful?"

The young man glanced down at her. But her eyes

were on the distant, tender blue of the coast about Whitehaven, and the Isle of Man hovering in a mother-of-pearl haze, like a dream-island about to alight. All his instincts told him to clasp her to him and take the consequences. But unfortunately Stair reasoned, which is the wrong method with a woman, especially with such a Pictish daughter of impulse as Patsy Ferris. He remembered what she had said to him the night before, as if that could have any bearing on her mood of to-day.

But so the chance passed. The fine morning gold was dimmed. They had looked too long. Patsy released his arm and they fell apart.

She remembered it was time to go indoors for breakfast. They went, their eyes averted, lest the other should see the remains of the morning glory. They kept silence also lest the thrill of it should tremble in their voices. But at the sight of the spread table and the homely scents of fried bacon and smoked mutton ham, Patsy became again very human, and set herself down in the place of house-mistress with a ripple of glad laughter.

" Only think, Stair ! " she cooed low in her throat, " here all by ourselves—a breakfast which I have prepared, eggs which I have found, milk which I drew from the cow—(they are two such nice cows, Stair !) and you and Whitefoot sitting opposite ! Just ourselves two, Stair. Not a chaperon—not a *gouvernante,* like the old horror the Princess used to threaten me with. No felt-footed lacqueys always bringing you the wrong thing, no Princess, no Miss Aline even ! Oh, I declare I am so glad—that I could—*take my breakfast !* "

Patsy broke off suddenly, making a wilful anti-climax to her speech, and, as Stair knew very well, not in the least finishing as she had meant to. But her housekeeping pride was aroused. He must eat. She would heap his plate. She had heard him late last night moving about. Had he not slept well ? That was why she had let him sleep on this morning, but he must not expect such indulgence every day. He would need to be out and at the net fishing

or among the flounders, for though they had plenty for the present in their store-room, they did not know when they might be succoured.

Then Stair put a question he had been thirsting to have answered all night.

"Whose is this island, and who has given us the right to use all the larder and live-stock?"

Patsy clapped her hands gleefully.

"Guess!" she cried—"three guesses!"

"*One*, wrong—no, not my father! *Two*, wrong, not Uncle Ju! THREE, WRONG—not Miss Aline! You made me gasp that time. I thought you could not miss it. We are here on this Island of Rathan as caretakers for Mr. Kennedy McClure. These are his cows. His sheep are on the heuchs yonder, and we have liberty to kill them for mutton when we weary of fish. These are his hens I let out this morning, and he brought Jean here with selected stores to make everything cosy for us!"

"And why does he do all this?" Stair inquired. Patsy flung up her head and smiled dazzlingly.

"Who knows?" she said. "He was great friends with me in London. He made the *Good Intent* hurry up when I was ready—otherwise you might have stayed a long time in prison. And this is better, eh, Stair?"

"And your Uncle Julian—Mr. Wemyss? Will they not be harder on him because I have escaped?"

"You have not escaped—you have been carried off," Patsy corrected. "So was Uncle Ju. He walked off the step of his verandah, into the arms of Captain Penman and half-a-dozen of the crew of the *Good Intent*. They seized him and carried him on the *Billy Goat*, which sailed immediately for parts unknown. But Joseph managed so well and the orders from headquarters were so strict, that the garrison did not even loot the house as they did at Cairn Ferris, that night when you disgraced us all by drawing royal blood at the White Loch. Here are some books which he sent for you—some from the Bothy, and some for me to read. I am not so learned as you, and Joseph chose

accordingly. If we have wet days, Stair, we can read all day with our toes to the fire ! "

" And why did not we also go on the *Good Intent* and so get away from all this trouble ? " Stair inquired.

" If you wanted Uncle Ju all day telling us what his Princess would have thought, said, and done—I did not. I wanted to be by our own two selves. Besides, if we were to get married, there is no country in the world where it can be done with such willingness and alacrity as at home. Also I have been brought up a good Presbyterian, and a parish minister and his session clerk—well, where in foreign parts will you find the like of Mr. Duff and honest James Fraser ? The *Good Intent*, indeed ! I think you are hard to please if you are not content with your present quarters, young man ! "

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE LAND OF ALWAYS AFTERNOON

By the afternoon of the second day Stair was finding himself unfit for human society, because he had not been able to shave since he left the prison. Of course he had brought nothing with him. There was no time. His hand went unconsciously every other minute to his scrubby chin. In truth, his Norse blondness did not allow it to show as much as he supposed. But that did not detract from the pervading sensation of disgustful grubbiness.

Patsy's eyes missed nothing, and very soon she surprised him by opening the door of a little tower chamber on the ground floor, sparsely but quite sufficiently furnished.

"I should feel very much safer," she said, "if you were to sleep within the house. You will find shaving materials in the corner!"

Stair could not thank her, but then neither did his accursed pride rise up in rebellion. She closed the door and left him alone. The water in the jug was hot. In a case marked "A. F." were razors and other necessities. Evidently Patsy had done some plundering, and had not come to him altogether without a dowry, though she had managed to do without the paternal benediction.

It was wonderful to feel clean again, to get the stubble off his cheeks, and to plash the cool water over his head and about his ears. When he had finished he felt measurably nearer to Patsy. He found laid out also clean shirts and neckcloths. Two complete suits of clothes were folded in an open chest of drawers. Patsy had evidently looted to some purpose.

Stair's first instinct was not to put on any of these things

till he had been assured that they were there with the consent of Adam Ferris. But he realised that he had already used the razors, and besides it would be idiotic, in his present awkward position, to strain at any gnats after swallowing such a camel as the marriage on the Colvend shore.

Besides, he had the sense to see that any obstinacy would terribly offend Patsy. She had evidently thought much about the matter, and whether her father knew or did not know, was secondary to the great need in Stair's heart of making Patsy happy. He did not, however, realise how long had been her thoughts on the subject, or that the suits of clothes which he supposed to have been lifted from her father's drawers, had been talked over by Patsy and Kennedy McClure in the garden at Hanover Lodge, ordered at a first-class London tailor's, with such approximate indications as size, height, and general proportionateness of body could supply. Patsy had paid for them out of her own money, and it was for the sake of the Princess, who was curious about parcels, that the case of shaving utensils had been lettered in gold with the initials of Adam Ferris.

An hour later, Stair came forth like a bridegroom from his chamber. Patsy, who had been on the watch, called out "Oh!" And if she had permitted her heart to guide her actions, she would have clung about his neck. He looked so noble. But all that she said was just, "I am proud of you, Stair—very proud!"

And, rightly considered, that was a great deal for Patsy to say.

. . . . . .

That day was a memorable one for Stair Garland. Patsy was charming and gay as she alone knew how to be. Having scanned the sea horizon with the Dollond glass to make sure that the firth was absolutely free from ships, they gave themselves up to the delights of the sunshine and summer air. Now they dipped into little coves, among dainty shells and glistening sand-breadths, where they sat

down cross-legged and played at "jecks" or "jacks"—one pebble in the air and lift five. Five in the air and lift one—with all sorts of intricate devices and variations, such as catching the tossed stones on the back of the hand, collecting them with a sudden side swoop, and so forth till Patsy was tired. Her nimble fingers left Stair's stiffer members far behind.

But it was different when a white stone was poised on the top of a rock, for Stair could send it rolling down nine times out of ten before Patsy had never so much as touched the target. Again on sheltered stretches Stair could send a smooth, flat stone skipping from one side to the other of the still bay, which Patsy declared was no sort of sport because hers, though every bit as well thrown as Stair's, invariably plumped to the bottom with a little farewell "cloop" as soon as they encountered the water. "You get all the best stones!" Patsy cried at last, vexed at her lack of success. Whereupon Stair handed over his ammunition to her, which "clooped" and sank as before.

"Then you *do* something to them—you must!" said Patsy, and with this luminous reasoning she turned and set off back to the old Rathan tower to get a book. Thereafter they read. That is, Patsy spun white cobwebs with her needle and Stair read to her—Shakespeare it was, and the play "The Tempest."

She did not know—she could never have guessed that Stair could read like that. She often stopped him to ask the meaning of a passage, and never did she ask in vain. Sometimes, indeed, she could have two or three interpretations to choose from, for in the Bothy Stair had gone over the play with Theobald's notes, comparing them with Pope's and Johnson's.

Patsy's heart was in a strange topsy-turvy state all that day. Sometimes she would forget herself and "cosy up" against Stair as she used to snuggle close to her Uncle Julian. Then something in the strong, clear voice, the square unyieldingness of shoulders, the body massive and forceful, caused her to draw hastily away. She thought

that Stair had not noticed, but his whole heart and body became tremulous to the brief caress, and when she recalled her favour, it was like the sun hiding his face and the air growing chilled as before snow.

Still Stair managed to keep his face as steady as his voice, and ended by growing so interested in the play that he forgot Patsy altogether. Being infinitely more subtle than he, Patsy knew and resented this, and it was only her cheek rubbing softly to and fro against his shoulder that made him gasp and fail in the middle of a great harangue.

At which Patsy smiled well-contented. She did not know what she wanted, exactly, but of this she was certain, that whatever it might be, she wanted it very badly.

The most curious thing was that occasionally she felt very angry with Stair, without being able to give a reason for her anger. The feeling passed in a flash and she saw what she called the " monumental Stair " again erected on a pedestal and knew that she had been cross with him because she wished him a little less " monumental." She did not blame herself in the least nor recall that Stair was only keeping his pledged and plighted word.

" I can't slap him as I used to do Louis Raincy. He is too big and too solemn. He would think it part of the treatment and only set his lips the firmer. But oh ! (clenching her fists) how I wish I could ! "

And indeed it might have helped matters.

The day sped on. Dinner was an outdoor meal. Stair carried it from the back door of the tower down to a little hidden cove where sea-pinks and prickly blue holly grew right down to the edge of the sand. Patsy served and they talked merrily. Though a famous " runner " of all manner of Hollands and Bordeaux, Stair tasted nothing except the water from the spring which he had himself drawn up clear and cold from the well in the courtyard—the well that had been made by the father of Patrick Heron, long before the time of the Raiders from the Hills.

Afterwards they stretched themselves out and chatted,

making each other's acquaintance, and deepening their mutual experiences. Patsy could now unseal her treasured tales. She spoke of Eitel the Prince, and Stair first blushed crimson and then went pale with desire to wring that well-nigh regal neck. He could forgive a great deal to the Princess, however, because she was acting as she thought best for Julian Wemyss's niece. And of course Patsy did deserve the best. Yet she had chosen the greatest detrimental of them all. However, he was a good watch-dog and would guard her well.

Louis Raincy he had less patience with. Why should any man slight Patsy, make love to another woman, and then come whining to be forgiven and taken back into favour? And this same Louis Raincy had been with them at the White Loch and had taken Patsy safe to his grandfather's at Castle Raincy, the most sensible act of his life.

But after all Stair found much cause to be content. He possessed, if not all he hoped for—at least he had Patsy, all to himself, and that by her own choosing and good will. What signified a few conditions to the bargain? He never could have dared to ask her, and she had asked him. Therefore she had a right to dictate her terms. He would not again behave like a sulky fool, as he had done on the first night of their coming to the Isle. He knew better now.

He watched Patsy's quiet untroubled breathing, the slow droop and quick recover of her eyelash as she grew a little drowsy. She pulled herself up and dug her elbow into the sand so that her head might be supported. Her eyes drooped again, but this time the eyelashes did not rise. The arm bent into an adorable curve, and the head, heavy with sleep, finally deposited itself on Stair's shoulder. With infinite delicate precautions he drew a cloak over her and settled himself to watch the colour rise in the cheek which he could see. He marked the crescent-shaped shadow of the long, upturned eyelash, the lips exquisitely formed, but not too small to be expressionless

like your rosebud-mouthed women. She was his, as the French say, "*en droit, mais pas encore en jouissance!*"

Still, nobody else could have her. That was the first and greatest consideration, and with that firm in his mind Stair kept himself steady till the sun was descending low in the sky of the west, and the clamorous birds began to flock back to the island—sandpipers peeping in the hollows about the sheep-fold, gulls and guillemots squabbling on the cliffs, and tarns restlessly dashing and swooping. For the tide was coming up fast and would soon be at the full.

Then he saw something far out but coming nearer that made his heart leap to his throat. He waited to make sure before awakening Patsy. But after five minutes there could be no mistake. He must tell her.

"Dear," he said, and trembled at the word, lest she should have heard it, "I am sorry to wake you, but there is a man swimming towards the island!"

. . . . . .

Patsy awoke, and in a moment was on her feet. Whether she had heard the word or not, certain it was that she had grasped the meaning of the sentence.

"Quick, Stair," she said, "get your gun!"

"The man is swimming," said Stair, "I think, instead, I had better get a dry suit of clothes. He cannot be very dangerous. I have my sheath knife if—but there is no fear. I can handle him!"

"Run no risks, Stair. I have ventured my all upon you! You are very . . . necessary to me!"

Ah, if he had only known that the word in her heart which she did not let her lips speak was not "necessary" but "precious"!

They went down together to the long spit of rock against which the swimmer was being driven. Stair looked at the black head on the surface of the water and realised that there might be trouble for both of them in the immediate future. He ordered Patsy to stand back.

"Why should I?" said Patsy, surprised at his tone.

"Because I tell you to!" said Stair Garland sharply, "there—on the top of the rock. Crouch down! Do not move till I give you leave." Then he began to wade out, and as he went she saw him assure himself that his sheath-knife moved sweetly in its scabbard with the click of easy-fitting steel.

"Eben McClure!" he cried, as in the long reach of the overhand stroke the man's face was turned towards him, "what are you doing here?"

Stair helped him out of the water. The man could hardly gasp at first, but in a moment words returned to him.

"The lost dog," he said hoarsely, "follows the only man who is kind to it."

And he would have fallen on the rock spit, if Stair had not caught him in his arms, and carried him to the little cove.

CHAPTER XXXIX

REBEL GALLOWAY

"You were here on this spot with your command, Captain de Raincy," trumpeted Colonel Laurence, "and yet you let the prison-breakers ride off! You ought to have attacked them, sir. You know you ought! It is as much as your coat is worth. The whole crew of them were there—the low fellow who shot the Duke where he drove into the infernal barricades—and the girl who ran away from London to send the fiery cross through the country. Damn it, sir, it makes me furious only to think of it. And yet, with a chance like that, you sat your horse and let them ride off!"

"I need not, I suppose," said Louis calmly, "point out to you that there were some hundreds of them, at least ten to one, and that most of them were known to me—though not, I believe, those who remained behind to fire the prison."

"Well," said Colonel Laurence bitterly, "whether known to you or not, you let them ride off unharmed after committing a capital crime. It is evident that you cannot be trusted in your own district. Your sympathies are not with law and order. Oh, I know something about the peculiar difficulties of officials in Galloway. There are certain acts—such as resistance to his Majesty's press, prison-breaking, and the whole business of smuggling which are here favoured by all from the Lord Lieutenant to the herd on the hills. I cannot get a magistrate to issue a warrant without referring the matter to the Secretary of State. I cannot execute it without a battalion of regulars. As an instance in point you were in command of a company

of dragoons. You saw this thing done. You knew those who did it, yet you did not lift a finger to stop them."

"We had only just arrived as they were riding off," said Louis, "I had no evidence that any offence against justice had been committed. I saw the prison on fire afterwards and I helped to put out that. Without my troopers it would have been wholly destroyed."

"No matter," said the irate Colonel, "we cannot have any such officer in the district—certainly not under my command. I mean that my orders shall be carried through at whatever risk. Now, I put it to you plainly, do you prefer to send in your papers or be publicly broken?"

"I shall not send in my papers," said Louis de Raincy, warmly, "and you cannot break me, publicly or otherwise!"

"And pray why not?"

Louis lifted his hand in the direction of Castle Raincy, an imposing pile of towers showing up dark on a hill to the west.

"That's why," he said, curtly, "I am the heir to a peerage, and my grandfather—well, I need not speak of him. Besides, I know the Duke of York, who is still commander-in-chief."

Laurence's temper got the better of him.

"It is you and the like of you who defy regulations and are the shame of the British army."

"Not so," said Louis, in a very level tone, "say rather officers who scramble for every safe money-making little post-recruit—raising, keg-hunting, 'stay-in-a-comfortable-corner' men, and keep as far away from the real fighting as possible. If the cap fits, why, put it on! And as soon as the war is over, if you still require any satisfaction, I am your man. In the meantime, Colonel Laurence, you will no longer be troubled with me. I have got my transfer to the Duke's army at Hernandez, and I am ordered to join my new regiment by the first ship to leave Liverpool with cavalry details. We shall soon be ready for the push across the Pyrenees in the rear of Soult!"

Colonel Laurence took the paper and glanced at it. Then he grunted and began to march out of barracks. He knew very well that, since the British army was officered on much more aristocratic and family lines than in later days, he could not hope to strike Louis Raincy with any real penalty. But nevertheless he turned about for a parting shot.

"That paragon of yours, the daughter of Ferris of Cairn Ferris, ran off with the chief criminal. She led the attack on the Castle here. They are hidden somewhere. If I catch them within my jurisdiction, I shall put a bullet through each of them."

"You can do as you like with Stair Garland," Louis Raincy called back, "but remember if you touch Patsy Ferris I will put a bullet through you if I have to hold the pistol to your ear! But I am not anxious—both of them would be quickly avenged. I advise you, Laurence, to leave that wasp's nest alone. You do not understand this people. I do!"

. . . . . .

Now Colonel Laurence, though he got the worst of his colloquy with Captain Louis Raincy, had a real grievance. It was true that throughout the province, and especially in its westerly parts, the Government hardly received the semblance of support. Some lairds and a few big tenants were loud Governmental men, but at home each had his store of "run" stuff ripening under some inconspicuous cellar, generally quite unconnected with his mansion. In those days they built even cothouses with more space below ground than could be seen above. The stones were quarried in the laird's own quarries. They were carried in his tenant's carts. They were laid by his own masons. The earth out of the cellarage was tipped into the nearest burn or over the cliffs into the sea.

There was hardly a farm lad from the Braes of Glenap to the Brigend of Dumfries who was not protected by his landlord from his Majesty's press. The sentiment of a whole countryside soon tells on the spirits of a man like Laurence, and especially since he had lost Eben McClure

(who had taken off from him the sharpest of the popular hatred) his soul had become darkened and embittered. He was expected to make bricks in a country where the straw did not grow—to fill regimental *cadres* with men, every one of whom was under the secret protection of the loyal gentlemen with whom he dined and talked. At hospitable boards he sometimes forgot himself and revealed his plans, only to repent most bitterly the next morning. For very sure was he that a messenger had started as soon as he had been shut into his bedroom, and that long before morning the quarry would be far away among the moors, lurking there as safely as ever did Peden, called the Prophet, once minister of New Luce.

His men were continually being called out by this Supervisor and that, but he had grown to be profoundly distrustful of such summonses. They brought him no honour, and not even any satisfaction. The wily exciseman, knowing well on which side his bread was buttered, had generally made his pact with the "runners." When the troops and the Preventive arrived on the scene of the "run," nothing remained except a multitude of pony-tracks, and occasionally, if they were very swift and very lucky, the top-masts of a schooner or brig might be seen hanging like mist against the morning sky. Then the Preventives would run round looking behind ridges of rocks and exploring the bottoms of shallow pools, till they heroically took possession of the twenty or thirty casks of Edam Hollands or Angoulême brandy which had been left for them.

Then the newspaper account would run somewhat as follows:

"Important Smuggling Capture.—On the night of the 7th, acting on information received, the Preventive officers of Stranryan (Chief Supervisor Pirlock in command) assisted by a troop of H.M. 27th Dragoons stationed at the same place, succeeded in intercepting a most serious attempt at smuggling at Port Logan. Supervisor Pirlock

had had the place under observation for several weeks, and on the evening of the 7th he swooped down upon the law-breakers, completely broke them up, and captured no fewer than thirty large casks of fine liquors, both Dutch and French, probably all that the smuggling ship had been able to put on shore. The vessel was seen and her description will be sent to all ports, harbours, offices, as well as to the general agencies under the charge of H.M. Board of Excise.

" A few more such successes and our law-breaking friends will fight shy of the district occupied by the keen eyes and ready hands of so able and zealous an officer as Mr. Chief Supervisor Pirlock."

When a paragraph such as this came under the notice of Colonel Laurence, he would stamp up and down his room, swearing great oaths, till his majors had to take him in hand to prevent him speaking out in front of the men. He would have liked to throttle, not only Mr. Chief Supervisor Pirlock, but every Preventive officer in the district.

Decidedly there was something to be said for Colonel Laurence. Yet why did he remain ? As Louis had hinted, he had more than once exchanged when his regiments had been ordered abroad to the wars, in order to continue in the district. His long experience in the work was urged as a reason. But really the Colonel was hot on the track of his pension. He could not now expect any further promotion, and he knew nothing better to do than just to continue where he was, month after month, till the slow revolution of the years should bring him an income and repose.

If, however, he could lay his hand upon Stair and have him hanged in the teeth of all the lairds in Galloway, that would surely count for something with the Regent, and especially with the Boards of Revenue and Recruitment, which were naturally very sore upon the subject of the aforesaid Stair Garland.

CHAPTER XL

"WHY DO THEY LOVE YOU?"

WITH the coming of Eben the Spy to Isle Rathan a new life began there. At first Patsy was filled with indignation at the trust Stair placed in him. She knew that he had been with Uncle Julian and Stair in the Bothy of Blairmore. She had heard the tale of the test—the test of life or death. But somehow, because she had not seen it—because she had not been with the ex-spy day after day, she could not believe in the reality of his repentance. His deep-rooted admiration for Stair remained in her eyes peculiarly suspect. He seemed to be presuming too much. If she, to whom Stair belonged by right of purchase at so great a price, did not manifest her feelings—what right had he? Of course he had a purpose to serve, and that purpose was to betray them. How else should he have guessed about the island, and why should he come swimming out and interrupting their pincic like that?

Still there was a pleasant side to the matter. The cows were milked, the meals prepared. Fresh water was brought to every chamber by this man who never showed his face outside the house during the day. Patsy and Stair had nothing to do but to stray from one safe cove to another on the seaward side all through these long days, and so, resentment falling away, by and by Patsy fell into talk with Eben. He called her "madame," and rarely concluded a sentence without a reference to "Your husband, madame!"

This Patsy thought a great liberty. What could he know about the matter? He had not seen Saunders Duff's registers, and of a certainty Godfrey McCulloch had

not spoken. Still, she finished by liking to hear him say the words, and often left the real Stair idly tossing stones into the water, in order to go into the cool kitchen of Tower Rathan, to sit on one of the ancient oaken chests, a row of which ran round the walls, and hear tales of the dare-devil Stair, and especially to listen for the respectful repetition of her favourite phrase, "Your husband, Madame!"

She loved to hear how her husband (she could say the word to herself now sometimes) had accepted the outcast and had treated him like a man when he was trodden under foot. She could not listen often enough to the history of the restitution of the money and jewels with which Eben had ridden away from the White Loch. Stair had insisted on that, though he had no reason to love the Duke of Lyonesse.

Then she would go back and lo! there—prone on the sand, his rough muzzle on Stair's knees, his big brown eyes under shaggy bristles of eyebrow, gazing up into his master's face, lay Whitefoot. Only, such was the fineness of his breeding and the delicacy of his sheep-dog instinct, that he rose instantly when he heard Patsy's returning footsteps, and took himself out of the way. He worshipped none the less, only at a greater distance. Patsy's was now the first right.

"Why do they love you so much, Stair?" said Patsy abruptly, as she sat down beside him after one of these kitchen visits.

"They—who?" said Stair, sleepily. For warm pebbles, warm sands, the lee of a rock and the gentle lap of a sheltered sea, make for drowsiness.

"Well," said Patsy, "Eben and Whitefoot there—they don't care a straw about me."

"Whitefoot would defend you with his life," put in Stair, sitting up.

"Yes, because you tell him," said Patsy, pulling discontentedly at a blade of grass, "and as for Eben—he simply cannot keep from singing your praises!"

Stair laughed, gaily for him. He did not often laugh aloud.

"Patsy," he answered, "how many have loved you—Princes and Princesses, men and women in another world than mine? Now none of these love me—and strange as it may seem, I am not disquieted about the matter."

"I daresay not," snapped Patsy, who this morning for some reason was easily irritated, "but they are not here. Eben and Whitefoot are, and they go about worshipping you. Now, if you expect me to do the same, you are mistaken!"

"I am not expecting anything of the sort," said Stair patiently, looking past Patsy, away out to sea to the poised top of Snaefell lording it above the low-lying channel mists.

"Well then you ought!" cried Patsy, and turning on her heel she sped to the house to keep from crying, she did not in the least know why. And when Stair followed her to ask what was the matter, it stood to reason that he was met by silence and a locked door. If he had had more experience he would have remained where he was and let Patsy find her way back of her own accord.

One morning a week or two after, Patsy had gone out with her books and Stair was getting ready to follow her to the sea-ward looking side of the Isle, when Eben called him to the window of the kitchen which overlooked the long ridge of sand, shingle, and razor-like mussel shells which in the deeps of the ebb, constituted a practicable pathway across to the mainland.

For half-a-dozen tides each month, three in the middle of each neap, unless there were heavy winds from the south-west, Isle Rathan became a tidal island, and the ridge could be crossed on foot by those who made haste. This was not, however, often attempted, for the tides and currents were exceedingly tricky in these parts.

Eben pointed with his finger to a faint horizontal ridge on the mainland.

"Do you see anything there, sir?" he asked.

"No," said Stair, anxious to be off to Patsy, "some shepherds on the mainland have been making a new sheepfold, I suppose."

"A sheepfold is mostly round, sir," said Eben, "and if you will notice there are two turf dykes one behind the other. I don't like that. Besides, have you seen anybody working there? I have not. And would herds cover their work so neatly with turf? From here it might be twenty years old—only I know it was not there when I passed that way down to the Orraland Point where I began to swim out."

"I see you have an idea," said Stair, "out with it! Tell me what you think!"

"Sir," said Eben McClure, "I have every need to serve you faithfully, and I should never forgive myself if by chance I had brought the enemy on you. I learned from my uncle where you were. He also has grown to trust me, sir, because you found me trustworthy, and he was willing that I should come, in order to be of what help to you I could. He cherishes the lady your wife above all others in the world. I had thought Kennedy McClure a hard, selfish old man, and so he might have been but for her. But he is never tired of telling how she saved him in London, and how she was not ashamed of him even in the company of Princes and all the great folk of the town. Ah, she was counted a world's wonder, sir—our Miss Patsy, if I may make so bold as to call her so—when she was in London. There was no one like her—and it's not coronets she could have married, my uncle says, but crowns!"

"I know—I know," said Stair, somewhat impatiently, "but what is it you are afraid of?"

"The sappers, sir—the little burrowing men. They have far more sense than whole regiments of soldiers, and it is as likely as not that some one of them, anxious for promotion, followed me across country, and watched me down to the point of Orraland. I wish I had been more careful of my footprints, but the woods were soft and I kept under shelter till the last moment!"

"Well, what of it—get on, Eben!"

"Sir, these are sappers' trenches, or I am no judge! And what's more, they are made to command the approach by the ridge to the tail of the island."

"But we are almost at the height of the flood tides, and there can be nothing to fear from that direction till the neaps come, and not then if the south-west wind blows as it has done ever since we came here. Why, we have hardly ever seen the back of the ridge black for half-an-hour."

"I know," said Eben, shaking his head, "but they are long-patienced fellows, these sappers—not like cavalrymen or lazy Preventives, who want nothing better than to lie up with a pipe and a mutchkin!"

"Some night we shall row over and see, Eben," said Stair, preparing to depart, "if they are lying in their rabbit-hutches we might give them a rare fright!"

"No," said Eben, "I don't mind going myself, but what would that child do without you? Answer me that, sir! No, what I want you to do is to send Whitefoot with a message to my uncle and get the *Good Intent* here by the next neaps. Could the dog do that, sir? They say he is wise."

"Well," said Stair, considering, "I don't think that Whitefoot could go directly to Supsorrow and find out your uncle. But he could take a message to Jean, if he were put a little bit on the road—say through the Blue Hills glen and over the old bridge of Dee. I daresay he could make it even from here, but he has never been past Dee Bridge by land. Then Jean would send on the note to your uncle by Agnew—he is the youngest and fleetest!"

"He and I shall start to-night," said Eben the Spy, "I shall be back before the morning. I shall see him safe across Tongland Bridge and be home before daybreak. The nights are lengthening."

"If you think it is necessary," said Stair, stepping out.

"It *is* necessary," said Eben, emphatically. "It is so important that I would run all the way myself, if I could do the journey as fast and as surely."

Stair and Patsy spent the day in the usual way out on the cliffs, coming in for their meals as leisurely as to an hotel and as certain that they would find everything in order.

Stair said nothing to Patsy about his talk with Eben. He did not mention the curious ridges so carefully turfed with green which were gradually penning in the end of the shore passage. But in spite of this, he thought a good deal. Who could be at the back of this steady pursuit? Surely not Louis Raincy. No, Raincy was a Galloway man, and even if Patsy were not there to be considered, he would not hunt Stair Garland. He might have his own quarrel with him, but he would not take this way of avenging himself.

That night, as soon as Patsy said good-night and went up-stairs, Eben made a parcel of his clothes, and at a sign from his master Whitefoot stood ready to plunge in and swim across along with Eben. His collar, duly charged with Jean's letter, was tied in the bundle along with the ex-spy's clothes, and would be put upon him after the moorland winds had dried the mane of hair about his neck.

"*To Jean*—you hear, Whitefoot—*to Jean!*"

And Whitefoot leaped up to lick Stair's face in token of complete understanding.

It was not a long swim, and the pair took the water at the very height of the tide. They would hardly lose any way as they pushed towards the strand beneath the farm-house of Craigdarroch, which was the nearest point on their road to the old Bridge of Tongland, beyond which Whitefoot knew his trail.

Stair watched them out of sight. They swam silently and evenly into the darkness, and in a quarter of an hour he heard the signal agreed upon—Whitefoot's singing yelp with which he assisted the precentor in starting such minor tunes as Martyrs and Coleshill. Then he turned and went slowly back to the old Tower of Rathan. Patsy's light was not out, and he stood a long while in the courtyard looking at up it.

Many were making sacrifices for Patsy's sake, but none,

he thought, such great ones as he. Still, so it was nominated in the bond. And, touched by a memory, he took out his Shakespeare and read the "Merchant of Venice" till he fell asleep.

The candle had burned itself out when he awoke. The early rose of a coming day was looking in at the top of the blinds. He heard the rattle of pebbles tossed against the half-closed wooden shutter. He opened, and there, pale as a spectre, stood Eben McClure. His teeth were chattering, so Stair made haste to let him in. He gave him a strong "four fingers" dram of Angoulême brandy, before making him roll himself up in a blanket and lie down in his warm place. Stair would be cook for one morning.

He did not disturb the sleeper when Patsy came down, smiling and happy, with another day of peaceful pleasure before her in their Rath or Isle of the Fairy Folk.

"Eben McClure needed to send a message to his uncle," he said lightly, "so he swam across with Whitefoot, and being chilled when he got back, I gave him a dose of spirits and made him go to bed."

Patsy made no remark. She had accepted Eben as a fixture in their *ménage*, and took no further concern about the matter. But Stair looked out many times at the green trenches closing in the land entrance to the isle, and even as he looked, it seemed that during the night the parallels had crept down a little nearer to high-water mark.

If so, Eben the Spy was right, and for Patsy's sake their precautions had not been taken a moment too soon. The sooner the *Good Intent* was on the spot the better.

CHAPTER XLI

THE BATTLE OF THE CAUSEWAY

PATSY was a prison-breaker. She had not only resisted but defied lawful authority. She had broken "with the armed hand" into one of his Majesty's defended prisons. She had taken out men awaiting trial for capital offences, and to finish all neatly, she or her followers had burned the Castle of Stranryan.

As for Stair, the counts on his indictment were as the sands by the seashore for multitude. There was no doubt that the sappers would earn the thanks of their superiors, of the whole Board of Excise and of the Office of Recruitment for the two services by handing over the two who had so long terrorised the best efforts of their agents in Galloway. Eben, as a thief and a traitor to his salt, would be an additional prize. Surely all this was worth working and waiting for. So at least thought Colonel Laurence, who had patiently followed them westwards till he came across the tracks of Eben McClure when he prepared to swim across to the island from the point of Orraland.

The days went slowly for Eben and Stair, who were waiting for the neaps and the coming of the *Good Intent*. They sped fast for Patsy, who now ran unashamed about the island with Stair's hand in hers. Never had there been such a companion. Never had she been so happy.

What troubled the men most was the failure of Whitefoot to return. To account for this, Stair had invented a score of reasons, in none of which he believed himself. It was now Thursday and the day after next, or more exactly during the early morning of Friday, they would

see the middle of the neaps. If at all the ridge would be fully uncovered then, and in the absence of a strong south-wester (which now seemed unlikely), the track might remain uncovered for a couple of hours.

All that day there had been unusual semaphore signallings and wavings of flags on the heights facing the island; but Stair, anxious to keep Patsy ignorant and happy as long as possible, still hesitated to tell her. They had gone down to Leg-o'-Mutton Bay where the shells they called by that name were to be found. An absolute silence reigned as they stood together looking out towards the sunset playing on Screel and Ben Gairn, till, with the tail of his eye Stair saw something moving along the ridge above them.

He turned swiftly, and there was Whitefoot, but a Whitefoot who dragged one foot painfully after the other, yet who, at sight of his master, wagged his great tail and gave vent to his old "*Aaa-uch*" of joy. The dog tried to bound towards them, but he had overestimated his strength. He toppled forward, whereupon Stair ran to him and carried him down in his arms. There was a bullet-hole behind his shoulder, but in spite of that the dog had swam the strait to find his master.

Stair laid him down and Patsy hastily tore off the flounce of a dress to bind about the wound. Stair took off his coat and wrapped Whitefoot in it. But he was not easy, shaking his head and turning it about to indicate that he had some message which must be delivered immediately. To quiet him, Stair undid the collar and pulled out a little square missive.

"*The 'Good Intent' will be with you and send a boat Friday morning!*"

As soon as Whitefoot saw the white half sheet in Stair's hands, he crawled a little farther up on his master's knees. His beautiful eyes, that were fixed on Stair's face, gradually blurred and grew filmy. He moved his head restlessly as he was wont to do when seeking a caress. Stair's hand was laid on his head to soothe him. Whitefoot

stretched himself out on his master's knees for the last time with the long, contented sigh of one about to sleep, and shut his beautiful eyes for ever. Only his tongue continued to lick his master's hand for another moment or two.

"Oh, Stair," cried Patsy, "how he loved you—he died for you!"

"No, dear," said Stair softly, "for us!"

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The next was a day of anxious tension. The long sinuous snakeback of the shell-ridge showed black all its length at the bottom of the afternoon ebb, but contrary to their expectations nothing moved in the camp of the enemy. It was evident that they were waiting for the early morning. The water would be at its lowest shortly after three, when the rush could be made with sufficient light to see. This was the more necessary as there were many quicksands to either side and in one or two places the ridge was not quite continuous. The winter storms altered it, sometimes by many feet, leaving isolated humps and mounds with quicksands about them, which might easily trap the unwary. The enemy was evidently not going to take any risks.

After Whitefoot's death Stair had perforce to tell everything to Patsy. It was wonderful how it strengthened and reaffirmed her.

"Why did you not tell me?" she said. "Why did you take counsel with everybody but me?"

"I did not," said Stair, smiling at her. "It was Eben who discovered everything, and then came and asked me. I thought that there might be nothing in it, and it was not till I was perfectly sure, that I saw the necessity of disturbing you."

"You will never treat me as a child again?" she had her hands on his sleeve now, and was looking up into his face.

"No," he said, "I know too well who carried me off here, breaking prisons to get me—and has not known what to do with me since!"

"Oh, don't say that, Stair. I love you very dearly—more than I thought possible."

He gazed at her for a moment, saw that his time had not yet come, and then gently patted her cheek, so gently that she did not resent the caress. All that day they watched the curving trenches from a little angle of the tower from which a rifle could be brought to bear on the shell causeway. That afternoon seemed everlasting. It was a clear, still twilight, and they did not dine till nearly midnight. If the *Good Intent* were to send a boat it would be to the back of the island which the tide never left. Indeed, Leg-o'-Mutton Bay was the only spot where a boat could land. There was always deep water there.

At one o'clock Stair saw a ship's lights very far away. It was very doubtful, even supposing that she were the *Good Intent,* that she could be there in time. But in the crucial hours, Eben the Spy proved himself wonderfully helpful and encouraging. His Uncle Kennedy never promised without keeping his promise. There might be a bit of a skirmish as the men were coming over, but he could warrant that they would be safe on board along with Captain Penman before ever a soldier set his foot on the island. On this he would pledge his life.

In view of all the facts this was not very convincing, but all the same it was distinctly cheering.

The blank night wore to a kind of grey over the sea, though the land was still in deep shadow. Across the grey ran the coils of the black causeway. The light was coming fast now and for the first time Eben lost his equanimity of spirit. He was in haste to have them gone out of the Tower.

"Take Mrs. Stair down to the landing-place, sir," he pleaded, "take her to the little cove where the boat will come in. They may be on the shell-track any time now."

And as he spoke both Stair and he heard and recognised the loud rattle of a ship's anchor chain.

"There," he cried, "off with you! There is not a moment to lose. Ah, there they come. But that is only

the first of them. I can easily stop these. Out at the back door! The wicket in the wall is open. Keep on through the hollow and you will find the boat ready. Do not wait for me. I have my own life arranged for. Do not fear for me!"

He hustled them out with a haste which left them no time for explanation. The men who were hastening across the causeway had less than a mile to run. It was, however, by no means easy going, and it would take them at least ten good minutes. Stair took Patsy down to the Shell Bay by the safest path, and even before they reached it they could hear the beginning of a fusillade in their rear. The boat from the *Good Intent* was already on the way, rowed by four sturdy seamen, yet it seemed to them both as though she would never arrive. They looked behind them, expecting every moment to see a rush of men come at them over the crown of the island.

Stair could stand it no longer. He must see what was going on, and he mounted the rough sides of the little heathery knoll called quaintly Ben Rathan. Patsy would not be left behind and he found her at his side. She could, in fact, have been there long before him.

But what they saw struck them dumb.

In a rough trench at the island end of the shell causeway, and quite clearly evident beneath them in the young light of the morning, were three figures, two of them obviously dummies, but with guns at their shoulders and hats on their shapeless heads. Bounding hither and thither, now along the top of the trench, now rising breast-high to fire was a man so like Stair Garland that Patsy had to look again at the blond giant beside her to make sure. Then they understood.

It was the ex-spy clad in the cast-off suit which Stair had taken off the first morning after their coming to the island. Stair's well-known bonnet with its tall feather was on Eben's head, and after every shot or two, he waved it in the air and shouted to the assailants to come on. The half-dozen sappers who had tried the first rush were

now lying flat behind stones, and one lay bunched up as if wounded. The false Stair ran to and fro firing the muskets over the shoulders of his auxiliary potato-sacks. Then he shouted again defiantly, and leaping to the cliff's edge where he stood clear against the sky-line, he fired again. Patsy could see the mud-and-water spurt up from where the bullet struck. From the mainland a score more of men took the pathway, keeping as widely apart as possible. These were Colonel Laurence and his first reinforcement. Up went the feathered bonnet in the air as Eben dived back into his rude trench.

The sailors kept calling now from the boat, eagerly, imperiously. It was necessary for them to return. Patsy was placed on board and Stair wished to go back and help to defend the island. He could not leave Eben McClure thus. But Patsy was out on the shingle in a moment. If Stair went back so should she. Eben McClure had given her a letter which, he said, would explain everything. It was only to be read aboard the *Good Intent* after the anchor was up.

So they put about and in a few minutes they were having their hands wrung off by Captain Penman on his own quarter-deck.

"I am glad to see you," he cried, "I thought I heard firing. They must have been pretty close—not much sea-way in your last tack, eh? But come below. You will find everything in my cabin. The owner said most particular that it was to be made all spick and span for you. Honoured I am to see you again on my ship, Mistress Garland!"

As they turned the corner of Isle Rathan, Stair and Patsy could see that the sham defences had been carried with a rush, and that something lay very still behind the hastily-dug trench. Patsy's keen eyes noted that it was still wearing Stair's bonnet.

She turned and ran below weeping bitterly.

"Oh, Stair, they do not love you better than I!" she wailed as she clung passionately to him; "no—not though

they die for you, and I am only a drag on you. For I love you! I love you—and I too would die for you!"

Her arms were about her husband's neck and her lips were pressed for the first time to his.

"Dear," he answered softly, "perhaps you were meant to live for me!"

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The letter which Eben had given to Patsy was a very simple one.

"Dear Sir and Madame" (it read), "if we are hard-pressed I am going to fight them off to give you time to get away. I was a bad man till Mr. Stair believed in me. I think it an honour to die for him and for his wife. Madame, be kind to him, for he deserves it. There is no such man in this world, I do assure you of that.

"Your obdt. humble servant,

"E. McClure.

"P.S.—I should like Mr. Stair to tell my uncle that I did not disgrace the family name."

In a letter left in charge of Captain Penman, Kennedy McClure had sent Patsy a packet of banknotes with his love. The emigrants were to be taken to Leghorn and landed there. Thereafter they could remain at Pisa or Florence as suited them best till the storm blew over and their friends made arrangements. Miss Patsy must not mind taking a little money now, for he had meant her to be his heir ever since he had charged himself with her future by helping her to run away from princesses and suchlike great people in London. And as for Stair Garland, he really had been owing him all that and more for a long time.

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It was the autumn of the year after Waterloo when they next set foot on Scottish soil. They might have come sooner, but while Napoleon ruled communications were difficult, and now there were three of them to think about.

Recently, however, Kennedy McClure had died of a sudden apopletic seizure and had left Stair a rich man. But the estate was one which needed very constant and personal attention.

Uncle Julian they had already seen twice in Florence and once in Rome. Old Brunschweig was also dead and there was more than a likelihood that the Princess would not bear the title of Princess much longer. She would lose her rank, but she would be rich enough and happy enough to make up for any loss of dignity under the name of Mrs. Julian Wemyss.

Adam Ferris and Miss Aline received them on the quay. She had got the house of Ladykirk in order for them. She had opened up the orchard portion and given them the whole of the east wing to themselves. She would be more than ever in the garden among her flowers. The stables also were at hand. Stair would need many horses for his riding if he meant to follow in the footsteps of Kennedy McClure, and she could never, never bide to see her darling enter as a bride into a house with the mischancy name of Supsorrow. Besides she herself had no heirs, and it was not meet that Ladykirk and Balmacminto should go to any other than Patsy. It would fit in fine with the Ferris properties some day, when young Kennedy Ebenezer Garland thought of settling !

So she chattered as they drove through Stranryan, and the folk flocked to their doors to see the strange foreign lady and gentleman whose names even they had not yet heard. On this point Mr. Ferris had thought it best to be silent, and with some difficulty had persuaded Miss Aline to do the same.

Well, she agreed, they would be tired, the poor things. What need to have all the mob at their heels shouting and " yellyhooing " ?

But when they passed the blackened walls of the ancient prison, which had not been touched since that last dire rising of the Bands under Patsy's leadership, husband and wife clasped hands under cover of the carriage-rug,

and Miss Aline smiled as she caught them doing it, which pleased her better than many fortunes.

It was of a surety the new day, and all the ill old times of struggle and passion had passed away—as well from their hearts as from the old mother Province which they loved.

THE END

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